

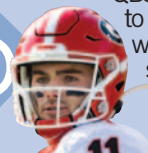
MUSIC: New releases chock full of holiday cheer **Pages 24-25**

FOOD: A french fry purist ponders poutine **Page 29**

TRAVEL: Tourists turning to stunning Faroe Islands **Page 30**

EUROPE
& PACIFIC
WEEKEND
EDITION

COLLEGE FOOTBALL
QB's led their teams to SEC title game with contrasting styles of play
Back page



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Volume 78, No. 167 ©SS 2019

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2019

平成32年4月5日 第三種郵便物認可 日刊(土日除く)
発行所 星条旗新聞社 〒106-0032 東京都港区六本木7丁目23番17号 定価 ¥100

\$1.00

Sailor kills 2 civilians, himself at Pearl Harbor

By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
AND WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii—A sailor killed two civilian workers and injured another Wednesday before killing himself at Pearl Harbor Shipyard, the military said.

The shootings happened at the shipyard's dry dock 2, and the victims were Defense Department employees, said Rear Adm. Robert Chadwick II, Navy Region Hawaii commander.

Chadwick said the sailor was assigned to the submarine USS Columbia, which is undergoing repairs in dry dock.

The Associated Press reported Thursday the shooter was a 22-year-old enlisted sailor named G. Romero. AP quoted a military official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to provide details that had not been made public.

Victims' names will be released after families are notified. The surviving victim was at a hospital in stable condition, Chadwick said.

Chadwick, who said the motive is unknown, declined to say whether the sailor was on duty at the time of the shootings. It is unclear whether the sailor knew the victims or if they were randomly targeted.

Personal firearms are not allowed on base, he said.

Chadwick said officials will look at "every aspect of it — what lessons we can learn, what additional security procedures would be needed."

"But again, we're still very early in this investigation," he added.

Base security and Navy investigative services are investigating and interviewing witnesses, he said.

The base went into a lockdown for nearly two hours after the 2:30 p.m. shooting. About 4:10 p.m., base officials tweeted that "gates and base access are now open."

SEE PEARL HARBOR ON PAGE 5



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., announces plans to advance the impeachment process at the Capitol on Thursday.

'The president leaves us no choice but to act'

Pelosi says House will draft articles of impeachment against Trump

By LISA MASCARO
AND MARY CLARE JALONICK
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House is pressing forward to draft articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump, Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced Thursday.

"Our democracy is what is at stake," Pelosi, D-Calif., said somberly. "The president leaves us no choice but to act."

Pelosi delivered the historic announcement in solemn tones, drawing on the Con-

stitution and the Founding Fathers, as Democrats push toward a vote, possibly before Christmas.

"The president's actions have seriously violated the Constitution," she said from the speaker's office at the Capitol. "He is trying to corrupt, once again, the election for his own benefit. The president has engaged in abuse of power, undermining our national security and jeopardizing the integrity of our elections."

"Sadly, but with confidence and humility,

with allegiance to our founders and a heart full of love for America, today I am asking our chairmen to proceed with articles of impeachment," Pelosi said.

At the core of the impeachment probe is a July call with the president of Ukraine, in which Trump pressed the leader to investigate Democrats and political rival Joe Biden as the White House was withholding military aid to the country bordering an aggressive Russia.

SEE PELOSI ON PAGE 10

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	Azores	Change in price	Belgium	Change in price	Turkey	Change in price
Germany	\$2.838	\$3.262	\$3.512	\$3.333	---	---	\$3.503	---	---	---
Change in price	-.004 cents	-.016 cents	-.0015 cents	+.004 cents	---	---	-.015 cents	---	---	---
Netherlands	---	\$3.837	\$4.047	\$4.055	---	---	\$3.600	\$2.860	\$3.130	---
Change in price	---	+.02 cents	+.021 cents	+.054 cents	---	---	+72.2 cents	+13.1 cents	+2.3 cents	---
U.K.	---	\$3.172	\$3.422	\$3.243	---	---	\$3.313	\$3.134	---	---
Change in price	---	-.016 cents	-.0015 cents	+.004 cents	---	---	-.015 cents	+.004 cents	---	---

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	South Korea	Change in price	Guam	Change in price
Japan	---	\$3.299	---	\$3.119	\$2.659	---	\$3.329	\$3.149
Change in price	---	-2.0 cents	---	No change	No change	---	-2.0 cents	No change
Okinawa	\$2.629	---	---	\$3.119	\$2.639**	\$3.059	\$3.309	---
Change in price	No change	---	---	No change	No change	-2.0 cents	-2.0 cents	---

* Diesel EFD ** Midgrade
For the week of Dec. 6-12

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	Commercial rates
Euro costs (Dec. 6)	\$1.1382
Dollar buys (Dec. 6)	60.8786
British pound (Dec. 6)	\$1.35
Japanese yen (Dec. 6)	105.00
South Korean won (Dec. 6)	1,159.00
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
British pound	\$1.3150
Canada (Dollar)	1.3175
China (Yuan)	7.0447
Denmark (Krone)	6.7310
Egypt (Pound)	16.1098
Hong Kong (Dollar)	\$1.1101/0.9008
Hungary (Forint)	29.97
Israel (Shekel)	3.4645
Japan (Yen)	108.84
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3036
Norway (Krone)	9.1454
Philippines (Peso)	50.84
Poland (Zloty)	3.85
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7501
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3614
South Korea (Won)	1,190.27

Switzerland (Franc)	0.9891
Thailand (Baht)	30.35
Turkey (Lira)	5.7536

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	4.75
Discount rate	2.25
Federal funds market rate	1.56
3-month bill	1.51
30-year bond	2.23

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

TODAY IN STRIPES

American Roundup	20
Classified	47, 50
Comics	42, 51-52
Crossword	42, 51-52
Faces	43
Opinion	44-45
Sports	53-64
Weekend	21-42

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MILITARY

Senators: Delays in ship care may impact readiness

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — During the last five years, Navy vessels have spent an unplanned 33,700 days — or about 90 years — docked at shipyards for maintenance, according to a recent government report. This statistic raised concerns from senators Wednesday about the ability of the service to conduct its missions around the world.

“One effect of these delays is fewer ready ships, which places a greater stress on our fleet to meet all of its operational demands,” Sen. David Perdue, R-Ga., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee subpanel on seapower, said during a hearing about maintenance delays.

Shipyard delays have been an issue for years. A report published Wednesday by the Government Accountability Office found the Navy faces “persistent and substantial maintenance delays” that affects most of its maintenance efforts and hurts its efforts to rebuild its readiness.

The report found, from fiscal years 2014 through 2019, the Navy could not complete scheduled maintenance on time in 75% of the cases.

“When maintenance is not completed on time, fewer ships are available for training or operations, which can hinder readiness,” the report states.

Perdue highlighted one of the examples in the report.

“In fiscal year 2019, maintenance delays alone resulted in the Navy losing the equivalent of 19 service ships. Of our [290-ship] fleet, 19 were not available to commanders,” Perdue said.

One of the reasons for the delays is the aging and outdated infrastructure of naval shipyards throughout the country. The Navy has a 20-year shipyard infrastructure optimization and modernization plan to meet the future needs of ship maintenance and the service has said it will cost about \$21 billion. However, a report published Nov. 25 by the GAO states the estimated cost is too low and will probably increase by billions of dollars to account for inflation, environmental remediation, and utility upgrades.

“It is still too early to tell if the plan is going to work,” said Diana Maurer, director of defense capabilities and management at the GAO and the author of the report. “The Navy still has to develop the all-important details of what needs to be done and determine how to keep the shipyards running while also rebuilding and enhancing them.”

As the Navy works toward its goal to increase the fleet to 355 ships by 2034, senators during the hearing raised concerns about whether the service would be capable of maintaining even more ships.



U.S. Navy

The USS Nimitz, in dry dock for maintenance in Bremerton, Wash., last year. A recent government report on unplanned maintenance for Navy vessels raised concerns in Congress about readiness.

“In this era of great-power competition, there’s no question that our Navy needs to grow larger and become more capable,” Perdue said. “My fear is that as the Navy grows, the maintenance capacity will not keep pace, the end result will be a larger fleet, but fewer ships ready for operational tasking.”

Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., asked how ship maintenance problems will affect building a larger fleet. James Geurts, assistant Navy secretary for research, development and acquisitions, said the Navy is trying to find a balance.

“Building new ships that you can’t maintain is not tremendously useful or not having the fleet size you need to operate globally is not useful. That’s a constant

discussion within the Navy,” he said.

Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee subpanel on readiness and management support, questioned how the Navy could implement the National Defense Strategy with the delays. The loss of ships in areas such as the South China Sea and Arctic “is a huge negative impact.”

Geurts said the Navy’s “past performance is unacceptable and unsustainable.” While encouraged by improvements the Navy has made in the past 18 months to address the issue, he said he was still not satisfied, and they have “a long way to go.”

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Anti-jamming systems to be on more than 300 Strykers

By MARTIN EGNASH
Stars and Stripes

VILSECK, Germany — The Army plans to install anti-electronic warfare systems in more than 300 of its Stryker armored vehicles in Europe, a decision made amid concerns that Russia and other adversaries would attempt to disable GPS-based systems in the event of a conflict.

The new Mounted Assured Positioning, Navigation, and Timing System, or MAPS, allows Strykers to transmit their position and communicate with each other when their GPS systems have been jammed.

The Strykers have been steadily upgraded with new systems and firepower over the past few years. Some can fire CROWS-J anti-tank missiles, while the “Dragoon” armored vehicles equipped with 30 mm cannons look more like narrow, high-speed, trackless tanks than light armored vehicles.

The weapons functions and other systems rely on electronics, which has spurred Army efforts to guard against jamming attacks.

The cyber domain is often times more contested than land, said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Michael Flory, an electronic warfare technician with the Army’s 2nd Cavalry Regiment based in Vilseck, Germany.

The Army tested about 60 of the anti-jamming systems last month during the Germany-based Dragoon Ready exercise. The systems held up well during range tests, Flory said.

MAPS is controlled by a combined GPS and anti-jamming antenna that lets soldiers know when they are under threat from electronic warfare, the Army said in a statement.

“It allows combat formations to continue their mission when in GPS-denied environments,” said James Spofford, the Army’s assistant product manager for the system.

The Army also plans to equip armored units with the technology and put MAPS in vehicles such as the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, M1 Abrams tank, and the M109 Paladin self-propelled howitzer at some point in the future, the statement said.

In Europe and beyond, Russia’s ability to launch cyberattacks and jam GPS signals has been a concern.

Last year, Western officials blamed Russia for jamming Norwegian military signals during Trident Juncture, a major allied exercise.

In Syria, Russia has been suspected by U.S. officials of launching electronic attacks and jamming coalition communication systems.

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USAF breaks ground on Yokota ‘Osprey campus’

By SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — The Air Force broke ground Thursday on \$63 million worth of facilities for CV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft at the home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo.

The work involves building 587,000 square feet, equivalent to about 10 football fields, of paved areas to support aircraft flown by the 21st Special Operations Squadron — the Dust Devils — which stood up at Yokota in July.

Five of the helicopter-airplane hybrids had been operating as a detachment at the base since October 2018. At full strength the squadron will fly 10 Ospreys supported by 450 personnel, officials have said.

A Shinto religious ceremony marked the start of work at the site of the new “Osprey campus” on the east side of the base runway.

“Forward-basing the CV-22



SETH ROBSON/Stars and Stripes

Military leaders break ground to kick off construction for CV-22 Osprey facilities at Yokota Air Base, Japan, on Thursday.

at Yokota provides an increased level of security, disaster preparedness, and emergency airlift capability during crisis situations that will allow U.S. Forces to support of the defense of Japan and the region,” squadron com-

mander Lt. Col. Jason Hock, said in a statement issued after the ceremony.

The first things being built are paved areas such as aprons and taxiways as well as drainage, said Col. Thomas Verrell, commander

of the Army Corps of Engineers’ Japan Engineer District.

They should be available for the Osprey squadron to use by March 2022, he said.

Other facilities, which will be built during the project’s second stage, include a maintenance hangar, operations warehouse, headquarters building and flight simulator.

However, all but the flight simulator are on a Defense Department list of \$3.6 billion in projects defunded in fall to pay for a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, Verrell said.

Japan-based Nippo Corp., which is building the Osprey facilities, is involved in other construction projects on U.S. bases in Japan, including facilities for Air Force MC-130J aircraft at Kadena Air Base and elementary schools and a power plant at Sasebo Naval Base, Verrell said.

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MILITARY

Better-fitting equipment for women sought

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

Allison Churchill never felt comfortable wearing anything with the Army Combat Uniform pattern on it. Depending on the garment, it either felt too big or painfully too tight.

In her five years as a public affairs specialist, it wasn't just that her uniforms always felt like they were falling off and her bulletproof vest squeezed her chest. It also seemed dangerous during her deployment to Iraq.

"The protective vest's shoulders were wider than my actual shoulders, which made it difficult to hold my M-16 [rifle] properly, and it never felt like my helmet sat on my head correctly," said Churchill, who left the Army in 2009 as a sergeant.

Since then, the military has made strides to improve personal protective gear for female service members, but a Defense Department report issued in 2018 again recommended the defense secretary get all military branches to issue gender-appropriate protective equipment to women for



ernst.senate.gov

Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., left, and Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, right, meet with U.S. troops in Afghanistan. Ernst announced a proposal Wednesday to speed up procurement of better-fitting gear for female service members.

training and operational use.

Looking to get that recommendation fulfilled, Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, announced Wednesday a proposal to push the Defense Department to speed up the process of getting women into appropriate-fitting equipment. Ernst, the first female combat veteran elected to the Senate, put forward the

Female Body Armor Modernization Act of 2019 alongside three fellow veterans, Sens. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill., Martha McSally, R-Ariz., and Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn.

"Women continue to make strides in serving in critical roles within our nation's military," Ernst said in a statement. "As a

woman who served in combat and commanded troops during Operation Iraqi Freedom, and with my own daughter who is going through training right now at West Point, I understand just how important it is for all service members to be properly equipped for the battlefield."

When it comes to getting equipment readily available to women, the new bill encourages the military to expedite the contracting, procuring and fielding of a new generation of protective equipment that better fits and protects all service members, and reduces preventable injuries by encouraging collaboration with academia and industry, utilizing emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, human factors modeling and digital predictive human modeling to develop the next generation of combat equipment and protective equipment.

The bill requires the military to submit a report to Congress in fiscal year 2021 concerning any barriers that they have encountered when fielding their newest versions of protective equipment

to service members.

The Defense Department's 2018 annual report of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, which recommended women get gender appropriate gear, stated access to female-specific or smaller-sized protective equipment was severely limited and only issued to some women who were deploying and not to women during initial entry training or in regular unit environments.

Poorly fitted protective equipment is not only uncomfortable, but it is a leading cause of injury for all service members, according to the report. Improvements have been made over the years, which have helped to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal and over-use injuries, the report said.

To continue to reduce injury, the new proposal requires the Defense Health Agency to begin administering a trackable system for data related to injuries to accompany the issuance of new protective equipment.

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New breast cancer screenings for Tricare users approved

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department will add new technology for breast cancer screenings to its Tricare coverage after female veterans in Congress pushed the Pentagon to make it available to active-duty service members, retirees and their families.

Digital breast tomosynthesis, a 3D mammogram said to better detect breast cancer, will be available for Tricare users beginning Jan. 1, but only on a temporary basis. The decision came after Rep. Chrissy Houlahan, D-Pa., and Sen. Martha McSally, R-Ariz., urged Thomas McCaffery,

the principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, to expand Tricare coverage to include DBT screenings.

"I'm glad to see the Department of Defense step up and provide needed coverage for DBT screenings to our active-duty service members and others," McSally said Tuesday in a statement. "This common sense change will benefit the many women who utilize Tricare."

The lawmakers introduced legislation in the House and Senate on Nov. 21 that would require Tricare to offer DBT as a primary and preventive health care service. Tricare already offers DBT in some instances for diagnosing patients but not for routine

screenings.

McCaffery sent a letter to McSally the same day that she and Houlahan introduced the bills, writing he had approved the addition of DBT for screenings but only provisionally. McCaffery couldn't add DBT as a permanent service because the United States Preventive Services Task Force doesn't currently recommend the technology for breast cancer screenings, he wrote.

"I could only approve provisional coverage at this time," McCaffery wrote. "This provision coverage can be extended for up to five years, during which time we are hopeful that the [United States Preventive Services Task Force] will recommend DBT for

breast cancer screenings."

Digital breast tomosynthesis builds a three-dimensional image of a breast to better detect and diagnose breast cancer, especially for women with dense breast tissue. The technology is already available to women who use Medicare or the Department of Veterans Affairs for their health care. Tricare, though, covers only mammograms with two-dimensional images, which some lawmakers contend is a suboptimal standard of care.

After the change goes into effect Jan. 1, the Defense Health Agency will fully implement DBT for breast cancer screenings by early 2020, McCaffery said. McSally's office plans to work with

the department to ensure it becomes a permanent service.

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Pentagon OKs awarding of medal for typhoon responses

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has authorized the Humanitarian Service Medal for troops who responded following a pair of devastating 2018 typhoons that ripped through American territories in the Pacific, among other nations.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the medal for service members who directly contributed to humanitarian and disaster relief operations in Guam and the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands after they were struck by Typhoon Mangkhut in September and Typhoon Yutu in October. The announcement was made Nov. 19.



Humanitarian Service Medal

The Humanitarian Service Medal was first issued in 1977 and has been awarded to service members deployed for disaster responses dating back

to evacuation operations from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in 1975 as the Vietnam War ended. The medal, which features an outstretched right hand, has since been issued for responses to scores of disasters ranging from hurricanes and floods to aircraft

crashes and operations to remove mines from former conflict zones, according to Pentagon records.

It was most recently approved for hurricane response operations following storms that struck U.S. states and territories in 2017 — Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria.

More than 800 service members from each military branch responded to relief operations last year after Typhoons Mangkhut and Yutu, both Category 5 storms that left long wakes of devastation across the Pacific, according to the Pentagon.

The 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit and the Navy's Wasp Expeditionary Strike Group led relief efforts in Guam and the Northern Marianas following both ty-

phoons. The responses included hundreds of Marines, sailors, airmen and soldiers, including Guam Army National Guard members, military officials said at the time.

Those service members who were physically in Guam or the Northern Marianas between Sept. 11, 2018, and Feb. 2, 2019, and "directly contributed to and influenced the action" during disaster operations should receive the Humanitarian Service Medal, according to the directive. Commanders in the rank of O-6 — colonel or Navy captain — or higher should submit rosters of their troops authorized for the medal.

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MILITARY

Glitch could mean late charges for AAFES customers

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Army and Air Force Exchange Service overseas customers who ordered online in recent months from exchange fast food restaurants could see batches of late charges turning up on their credit cards.

The exchange notified 32,000 customers in November that they had one or more delayed credit or debit card transactions, said Julie Mitchell, an AAFES spokeswoman.

The orders were not processed at the time of purchase due to a technical glitch.

The total amount of transactions involved is \$6.7 million, Mitchell said in a statement.

Customers caught up in the glitch were those who used the exchange's online food ordering system, iMenu360, and who then paid with a credit or debit card other than the Military Star card from June 25 through October. Five installations in Germany, one in the United Kingdom, one in Guam and 16 in the Asia-Pacific region were affected, Mitchell said.

The exchange is still retroactively processing charges from July and August, Mitchell said. Customers were notified via email that these changes would be applied in December, she said.

The remaining retroactive charges have already been resolved.

"The Exchange began notifying affected customers via email in November," Mitchell said. "We advised customers we could offer assistance and payment terms if the delayed transactions caused hardship."

The system glitch was discovered during financial reconciliation, when it was determined that all the payments had not been received, Mitchell said.

The exchange's online food ordering service for pickup or delivery is available at installations the company's restaurants serve in Okinawa, South Korea, Germany, the United Kingdom, Japan and Guam.

Customers can search by restaurant brand or location at aafesprem.imenu360.com.

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Pearl Harbor: Gunman assigned to USS Columbia, commander says

FROM FRONT PAGE

By 5 p.m., traffic into the base was backed up for a mile and the entrance to Pearl Harbor-Hickam from the H-1 freeway remained blocked. Dozens of journalists gathered on the lawn across from the main gate for Chadwick's press conference.

With a workforce of about 5,800 civilians and 540 Navy personnel, the shipyard is the largest industrial employer in Hawaii.

Chadwick said the shooting was "certainly a tragedy for everyone."

"The ohana is everyone who works on Pearl Harbor," he said. "Generations of locals have worked in that shipyard."

Ohana is the Hawaiian word for family.

Officials have opened the Emergency Family Assistance Center until further notice in the Personnel Support Detachment building for those affected, according to a base statement. Chaplain and counseling services are being provided there, as well as in room 130 of building 2.

Pearl Harbor is home to the U.S. Pacific Fleet along with 10 destroyers and 15 submarines.

The 148-acre shipyard is across



Chadwick

the harbor from the Pearl Harbor National Memorial, which on Saturday will mark the 78th anniversary of the attack by Japan that propelled the U.S. into World War II.

"The role that the shipyard played was pretty important in World War II," Chadwick said, referencing the attack and subsequent work there to repair and return ships to the fight.

Chadwick said the service would evaluate whether security should be upgraded before the annual ceremony. About a dozen survivors of the 1941 bombing were expected to attend, along with dignitaries and service members.

Wyatt Olson reported from Oahu.
Caitlin Doornbos reported from U.S. Naval Forces Japan headquarters at Yokosuka.
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MILITARY

Senators seek ways to curb suicide rates

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Train service members about what to do when a fellow soldier indicates suicidal behavior on social media. Offer access to Mobile Vet Centers for National Guard members during drill weekends. Increase Department of Veterans Affairs outreach to service members transitioning out of the military.

All are recent efforts, touted Wednesday by Pentagon and VA officials, to curb suicides — particularly among the youngest population of veterans and service members.

"Tragically, rates of suicide for our active-duty service members and veteran populations have increased in the latest reports, particularly affecting young men under 30," said Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., chairman of the subpanel on personnel for the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The reports revealed a rise in suicides despite the billions of dollars that Congress has directed toward the crisis.

"The Department of Defense spends more and more each year on suicide prevention, but the results are not nearly good enough," said Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., who has requested the hearing.

The senators, experts and officials at the hearing focused their attention on young veterans and service members.

The Pentagon's annual suicide report, released in September, showed service members who died by suicide were primarily enlisted men younger than 30. That population makes up about 46% of the military population but accounted for 60% of suicide deaths.

"This report emphasizes the need to target efforts towards the military's youngest population," the report reads.

Gary Orvis, director of suicide prevention at the Defense Department, shared one of the Pentagon's new efforts with



CARLOS BONGIOANNI/Stars and Stripes

Officials take part in a Senate Veterans Affairs hearing Wednesday on Capitol Hill in Washington to discuss suicide prevention among veterans and service members.

senators. It's a training video about "red flags" on social media that might indicate suicidal thoughts.

"The intent is for peers to help each other," Orvis said. "We know our young service members are using social media with regular frequency. We've also done research at DOD that shows people do disclose when they're having suicidal ideations or troubles on social media. So, this is a tool to help if you're seeing your buddy saying something. What can you do? What should you do? How should you reach out?"

Orvis said the video has been created but is being tested for its effectiveness before it's distributed throughout the military sometime next year.

Similar to the Pentagon report, the VA's newest suicide report found higher rates among younger veterans. In 2017, the most

recent year from which data is available, veterans ages 18 to 34 had the highest suicide rate, with a reported 44.5 suicides per 100,000 veterans. The rate among that population increased by 76% from 2005 to 2017.

President Donald Trump signed an executive order in January 2018 that aimed to eliminate barriers for transitioning troops to get treatment during their first year after military service.

Matthew Miller, the acting director of the VA's suicide prevention program, said Wednesday that the VA just implemented part of the executive order this week. The VA's new Solid Start program launched Monday. The program promises to contact all transitioning veterans at least three times during the first year after their military service to let them know of VA resources.

"Within the first month of separation, we are contacting every veteran we receive on a list of those separating, introducing them to the VA, services within the VA, offering them connection and resources," Miller said. "We'll send a letter to reiterate the services available. I look forward to positive results."

Of the veterans who died by suicide in 2017, 62% had not recently received treatment from the VA. The agency found suicide rates among veterans who had recently received health care through the VA increased at a slower pace than veterans who had not — a fact Miller said should spark hope.

"Amidst the difficult questions and the daunting data, there is hope," he said. "Although the rates of suicide are increasing across the nation, we know the rate is rising more slowly for veterans engaged in [VA] care."

In addition to young veterans and service members, officials and experts spoke Wednesday about the need to focus on National Guard members — another population that the Pentagon identified as having a high rate of suicide.

According to the Pentagon's annual suicide report, the National Guard had the highest rate of suicide at 30.6 per 100,000 in 2018.

The VA and Pentagon are teaming up to provide guard members with access to mental health care through Mobile Vet Centers during drill weekends, Orvis said. That initiative already began this year, she said.

Gillibrand urged Orvis to make another change and alter a policy that requires mental health professionals to report many service members' mental health concerns to a commander. She argued the policy "creates mistrust and acts as a barrier to treatment."

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GAO: Unreliable data used in reports on military housing

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

Data collected on privatized military housing was deemed unreliable and potentially misleading by a Government Accountability Office report released Tuesday.

The Defense Department used the data on resident satisfaction and maintenance in reports to Congress and to determine whether the 14 private companies managing base housing were eligible for bonus payouts.

"I'm trying to determine if I've been accidentally misled or intentionally misled," Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., said Tuesday during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing.

The GAO report's author, Elizabeth Field, director of defense capabilities and management, testified on her findings alongside top military leaders. The report is part of ongoing research by the GAO. A final report, expected in early 2020, could offer recommendations on improving privatized military housing.

Stories of houses filled with mold, rodent infestations and lead paint have led Congress to

take a hard look at the partnership between the military and the private companies that manage 99% of base housing in the United States. Top officials at five private companies managing military housing were to testify Thursday before the readiness subpanel of the House Armed Services Committee.

On Tuesday, Field used her opening statement at the Senate hearing to describe how the GAO uncovered the misleading on-base housing information given to Congress.

In May 2019, the Office of the Secretary of Defense released information that stated 87% of privatized housing residents were satisfied based on annual survey results from 2017, according to the GAO report. Field said she began examining the statistic and she realized it was "not in any way reliable" because of how the survey question was worded.

The secretary's office directed the services to ask residents "Would you recommend privatized housing," with available responses of "yes," "no" or "don't know." Instead, residents were asked on a scale of zero to



JOE GRONELSKI/Stars and Stripes

Elizabeth Field, who authored a Government Accountability Office report questioning military housing data collected by DOD, testified Tuesday on Capitol Hill.

five whether they agreed with the following statement: "I would recommend this community to others."

Each branch of service then used different methods to match the six response options that residents provided to the three answers directed by the secretary's office. Residents responding with a "3" to the Navy's survey were matched with "don't know," while Air Force residents with the same answer were matched with "yes."

Military officials also used its

high occupancy rate of about 93% to determine satisfaction, Field said.

"However, through our site visits where we conducted 15 focus groups with families, we learned that family members choose to live in privatized housing for reasons that have nothing to do with the housing itself," Field said. "Reasons such as living in close proximity to medical and education services for children with special needs or a concern that off-base housing is neither affordable or safe."

As part of her research, Field collected more than 8 million work orders from the 14 private housing companies from October 2016 to May 2019 to try to determine the quality of houses on military bases.

"Our hope was that we could use this data to determine the hazards, to see patterns over time and to assess the timeliness of maintenance conducted on the homes," she said. "Unfortunately, we found that because the data in these records are not captured reliably or consistently, they cannot be used to do so."

Among other problems, Field

found duplicate work orders and work orders with completion dates prior to when the resident submitted the request.

Aside from providing this data to Congress, the military also used the information to determine whether the private companies had earned performance incentive fees. The secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force said Tuesday that they are rewriting the determining factors of incentive fees.

The Army's new criteria will begin Jan. 1, said Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy. The Army recently withheld fees from private companies operating at Fort Benning, Ga., and Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., because of poor performance and work order response times, he said.

The Navy has not paid incentive fees in two years. Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly, "We're looking at those very, very carefully to understand whether or not they've earned them," he said.

Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett said the Air Force also has withheld incentive fees.

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MILITARY

Suit claims DOD defrauded out of \$1.3B in MRAP deal

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

A defense vehicle manufacturer has been accused by one of its former employees of bilking the Pentagon of \$1.3 billion by vastly overcharging the Marine Corps for components of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles used by troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Illinois-based Navistar Defense company allegedly ran "a pervasive and long-running scheme to charge the U.S. Government wildly inflated prices," said a court filing made public Tuesday by the U.S. District Court in Washington.

The whistleblower case was originally brought six years ago by Duquain Burgess, who worked in Navistar Defense's contract management department for over three years until October 2012.

Burgess alleged that his former employer and its parent company, Navistar International Corp., forged invoices, catalog prices and other documents to win the contract to build MRAP vehicles for the Marines. The government joined part of the case against Navistar Defense in September.

Navistar was awarded a contract in 2007 to build several hundred MRAP vehicles for the Marines to replace the Humvee, which was vulnerable to roadside explosive devices, the Department of Justice said Wednesday.

Over the next several years, the government paid Navistar De-

fense around \$9 billion, and the company produced around 4,000 vehicles. But nearly \$1.3 billion of the money paid out under the contract for parts including suspension systems, engines and chassis were based on fraudulent documents, the complaint said.

The fraudulent documents allegedly masked that the vehicle components Navistar Defense was selling to the Marine Corps either had no commercial sales history at all or, when they did, were worth about half the price the company was charging the government for them, the complaint said.

The company charged about \$250,000 for each chassis but sold an identical product for half the price to other customers, the lawsuit alleged. The Marine Corps paid Navistar Defense around \$30,000 over the usual price for suspension systems, racking up nearly \$120 million in overcharges for that component alone, the complaint says.

"Navistar Defense exploited the government's need for vehicles that would provide American soldiers with the protection they needed in the field, and fraudulently charged the government prices far exceeding those it charged other customers for the same parts and components," said the complaint, which was made public this week.

Navistar executives knew about the fraud and were actively involved in it, Burgess, the whistleblower, alleged.

"The Department of Justice will hold accountable those contractors who falsify information and thereby cause the military to pay inflated prices," U.S. Assistant Attorney General Jody Hunt said in a statement Wednesday. "We will take steps necessary to protect the military's procurement process from abuse."

Lyndi McMillan, a Navistar spokeswoman, told Bloomberg News Wednesday the whistleblower's complaint had no basis in fact or law.

"We believe our pricing was fair, reasonable and competitive, and we are disappointed the gov-



MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

A whistleblower case alleges that the Navistar Defense company bilked the Pentagon out of more than \$1 billion on a contract to build MRAP vehicles, similar to the ones above.

ernment has chosen to intervene in this matter," McMillan said in an email to Bloomberg. "The company intends to defend itself as necessary and appropriate."

The case could take three to

four years to come to trial, said Vince McKnight, a lawyer representing Burgess.

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Amazon official chides Pentagon on cloud deal

By JAY GREENE
The Washington Post

LAS VEGAS — Amazon's top cloud-computing executive publicly criticized the Pentagon's decision Wednesday to award a lucrative contract to rival Microsoft at the company's annual conference here.

"It's fairly obvious that we feel pretty strongly that it was not adjudicated fairly," said Amazon Web Services chief executive Andy Jassy during a news conference Wednesday. "If you do a truly objective, detailed, apples-to-apples comparison with the platforms you don't end up in a spot where the decision was made."

The contract, valued at up to \$10 billion over 10 years, was awarded to Microsoft in October and Amazon has formally challenged the Pentagon's decision, filing a protest with the Court of Federal Claims last month that cites comments by President Donald Trump indicating bias against the company. Trump has repeatedly criticized Amazon,

whose founder and chief executive, Jeff Bezos, owns The Washington Post.

"You ended up with a situation where there was significant political interference," Jassy said. "When you have a sitting president who is willing to share openly his disdain for a company and the leader of that company, it makes it really difficult for government agencies, including the DOD, to make an objective decision without fear of reprisal."

While Amazon is aggressively challenging the award, the Pentagon's decision has also put Amazon on the defensive at the cloud-computing re-Invent conference. Company executives often say they remain focused on customers, rather than competitors. But Jassy and other Amazon executives took opportunities during their presentations to chide Microsoft for high prices and restrictive licensing terms, as well as to tout their market lead.

Microsoft declined to comment on Amazon's claims.

MIDEAST/WAR



ALTAR QADRI/AP

Gratitude and grief in Kabul

Afghans attend a candlelight vigil in Kabul, Afghanistan on Thursday in memory of Tetsu Nakamura, a Japanese physician engaged in aid work who was killed Wednesday in a shooting in eastern Afghanistan.

Navy seizes suspected Iranian missile parts set for Houthis

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A Navy warship has seized a "significant cache" of suspected Iranian-guided missile parts headed to rebels in Yemen, U.S. officials said Wednesday, marking the first time that such sophisticated components have been taken en route to the war there.

The seizure from a small boat by the U.S. Navy and a U.S. Coast Guard boarding team happened last Wednesday in the northern Arabian Sea, and the weapons have been linked to Iran.

Officials said the incident illustrates the continuing illegal smuggling of weapons to Houthi rebels and comes as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were meeting, with Iran as the main topic.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to provide details about a sensitive military mission. In a statement, Cmdr.

Sean Robertson, a Pentagon spokesman, said a U.S. warship inspection discovered a cache of weapons and advanced missile components. He said, "An initial investigation indicates that these advanced missile components are of Iranian origin."

The U.S. has consistently accused Iran of illegally smuggling arms to Houthi rebels battling Yemen's government and has seized smaller and less sophisticated weapons in transit. The missile parts found in this incident were described as more advanced than any previously seized.

Since the spring, the Pentagon has beefed up its military strength in the region, adding about 14,000 troops, ships, aircraft and other assets in response to what officials said is a growing threat from Iran. Officials have been considering another increase of several thousand forces, which could include air, naval and ground troops, and weapons systems, but no decisions have

been made.

According to the U.S. officials, the USS Forrest Sherman was conducting routine maritime operations when sailors noticed a small wooden boat that was not displaying a country flag. The Navy and Coast Guard personnel stopped, boarded the boat for inspection and found the weapons.

Officials did not provide the exact number of missiles or parts but did describe it as a significant cache and said it was headed to Yemen. They said the small boat was towed into port because a leak was discovered during the inspection, and the people on the boat were transferred to the Yemeni Coast Guard. The officials did not say where the crew of the small boat was from. The weapons are still on board the U.S. ship. The officials said the U.S. is still examining the weapons to specifically pinpoint their origin.

Smuggling weapons into Yemen is a violation of a U.N. Security Council resolution.

DOD mulls more Mideast troops

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A top Defense Department official told lawmakers Thursday that more military forces could be sent to the Middle East as a check on Iran, after he and other Pentagon officials denied a news report that the increase could total as many as 14,000 troops.

John Rood, the Pentagon's undersecretary for policy, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that Defense Secretary Mark Esper was evaluating "a threat situation" emanating from Iran, which could lead him to advise President Donald Trump to approve new deployments. Rood was under questioning from multiple senators following the Wednesday evening Wall Street Journal report that cited unnamed U.S. officials who said Trump could make a decision this month on sending those troops.

Rood initially called the Journal story an "erroneous item" during a hearing meant to analyze the Pentagon's 2018 National Defense Strategy, which aims to focus military efforts on near-peer threats such as Russia and China over counterterrorism options that have dominated defense policy for nearly two decades.

Rood echoed an earlier denial by the Pentagon's press secretary Alyssa Farah, who tweeted the "reporting is wrong."

"The U.S. is not considering sending 14,000 additional troops to the Middle East," she wrote.

The Pentagon has deployed about 14,000 troops to the Middle East since May aimed at deterring Iranian aggression, following a series of attacks attributed to Iran on commercial shipping vessels and Saudi oil facilities. Those troops have largely included an aircraft carrier strike group, air defense troops, and fighter and bomber aircraft operators.

But Rood, under pressure later in the hearing from Republican Sens. Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee and Josh Hawley of Missouri, admitted top Pentagon officials have been discussing possible new deployments.

"We are evaluating a threat situation. If the secretary chooses to he can make a decision to deploy further troops," Rood told Blackburn, who questioned where the new forces would come. "Based on what we are seeing [with Iran], it is possible that we would need to adjust our force posture, and I think that would be a prudent step depending on what we observe."

Rood promised to discuss the threat and potential new deployments in a classified setting. Hawley called on better transparency from the Pentagon on the issue.

"It would be helpful to hear from the secretary on this issue," Hawley said, questioning the need for even more troops in the Middle East. "I would like to hear from him today. I think some clarification is in order. I would like to have that in public."

Rood defended the previous deployments, which built the American force posture to more than 3,000 in Saudi Arabia following the drone and cruise missiles strikes on critical oil infrastructure there in September. He said Iran had not conducted similar attacks since additional forces were sent to the Middle East.

"Our objective is to deter further Iranian aggression," he said, adding later: "I think they have done that."

Rood noted many of the U.S. troops that have been sent to the Mideast were naval, hinting more ships could be among the options for increasing troops there.

Adm. Michael Gilday, the chief of naval operations, said Thursday at a separate event that the Navy could "absolutely" surge multiple aircraft carriers into the Middle East if Trump wanted. The USS Harry S. Truman is currently on its way to the region, where it is expected to relieve the USS Abraham Lincoln, which was part of the initial May surge meant to protect American troops and interests in the Middle East from potential Iranian aggression reported by the intelligence community, Pentagon officials said at the time.

Stars and Stripes reporter Caitlin M. Kenney contributed to this report.

Prosecution: ICC judges were wrong to reject Afghan probe

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — International Criminal Court judges overstepped their powers when they refused to authorize an investigation into allegations of widespread abuses by government forces, the Taliban and U.S. military and intelligence operatives during the Afghanistan conflict, a prosecution lawyer

and victims' representatives said Thursday.

But a lawyer representing Afghanistan at an ICC appeals hearing countered by saying that Afghanistan opposes an international investigation and should be allowed to prosecute war criminals in its own courts.

They were speaking on the second day of a hearing into the ICC prosecution office's appeal

against an April decision by a pre-trial chamber to reject a proposed investigation in Afghanistan, saying it was not in the interests of justice.

The high-stakes hearing at the Hague-based court is focused on a proposed investigation that could lead to, for the first time, ICC indictments against Americans and help end widespread impunity for crimes in Afghanistan.

It is extremely unlikely that, even if the investigation were to go ahead and prosecutors indicted Americans, they would ever appear in court. The U.S. government is not a member of the ICC and refuses to cooperate with it.

While the U.S. government didn't send any official representatives to the hearing, President Donald Trump's personal lawyer, Jay Sekulow, was in court repre-

senting the European branch of the American Center for Law and Justice.

Sekulow said Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda wants the investigation to go ahead "because she thinks the United States may yet decide to cooperate. We submit that this ignores the history of principled non-cooperation under multiple administrations of multiple parties in the United States."

MILITARY

Trump mars unity message at NATO meeting

By ZEKE MILLER
and AAMER MADHANI
Associated Press

WATFORD, England — Aiming to play the role of global statesman as the impeachment drama was unfolding in Washington, President Donald Trump instead shattered NATO's professed message of unity at its 70th anniversary celebration in England and put his personal and policy differences with alliance members on stark display.

Trump called Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau "two-faced" and French President Emmanuel Macron "nasty" during a 52-hour trip that exposed the alliance's divisions on military budgets and relations with Turkey, as well as the U.S. leader's own unconventional ways on the world stage.

At the same time, he found it difficult to leave behind events in Washington, lashing out as House Democrats resumed their push for impeachment over Trump's call for Ukraine to investigate a political rival. He said it was "sad" that Democrats were pushing ahead with the inquiry when "there was no crime whatsoever and they know it."

Trump, looking to showcase foreign policy wins as he heads into an election year, offered a more optimistic outlook for NATO's future. He took credit for boosting the share of NATO nations that are meeting the alliance's goal of spending 2% of gross domestic on defense and sought to pressure more countries to increase their military budgets. But he also put a spotlight on his administration's lingering to-do list: ending a China trade war he instigated, passing the U.S.-Mexico-Canada agreement as well as trade deals with the European Union and Britain.

A day after Trudeau was overheard gossiping about Trump during a reception at Buckingham Palace, Trump called the Canadian leader "two-faced." In an unguarded conversation, Trudeau told leaders, including Macron and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, that "he takes a 40-minute press conference off the top," an apparent reference to Trump's long and unscripted question-and-answer session with journalists earlier that day. Trudeau also said, seemingly about his meeting with Trump, "You just watched his team's jaws drop to the floor."

Trump fired back during a Wednesday afternoon meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. He suggested that the Canadian's overheard comments were precipitated by Trump's decision to highlight the fact that Canada falls short of NATO goals on defense spending.

"The truth is that I called him out on the fact that he's not paying 2% and I guess he's not very happy about it," Trump said. Later, seeming to relish the spat,



FRANCISCO SECO/AP

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, left, and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, right, welcome President Donald Trump during a NATO leaders meeting at The Grove hotel and resort in Watford, Hertfordshire, England, on Wednesday.

Trump remarked, "That was funny when I said that guy was two-faced."

Relations between Trump and Macron, once the American president's closest European ally, deteriorated a day earlier in feisty exchanges on live television.

First, Trump slammed what he called "very, very nasty" comments by Macron, who had lamented NATO's "brain death" under Trump's leadership of the U.S. Then, in a later meeting on the sidelines of the summit, Macron rebuked Trump over his insistence that Europe repatriate its citizens who fought with Islamic State, as well as his unilateral decision to withdraw American troops from northeast Syria.

Trump's shift on Syria had cleared the way for a Turkish assault on Kurdish fighters who had been allied with the west in the fight against ISIS militants. There was more disagreement between Trump and European leaders over Turkey. Macron, in particular, wanted the alliance to do more to confront Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan over his incursion into Syria and his purchase of Russian surface-to-air missiles.

On Wednesday, Trump falsely claimed that Macron had taken back his comments about NATO's "brain death," even though the French leader said he stood by them.

It was far from the only inconsistency highlighted during two days of summits.

Trump, who has celebrated every new stock market high, claimed that he didn't pay too much heed to the market after stocks tumbled following his remarks that a China trade deal may not come until after Election Day. He also claimed it was his decision not to more quickly reach an agreement with China, as relations have soured over U.S. support for pro-Democracy protests in Hong Kong. Previously, Trump had said it was China that would rather wait for the election results.

Trump also declared NATO to be the healthiest it's ever been

the Russian air defense system.

The president abruptly canceled a news conference that would have played out at the same time as the impeachment hearing in Washington. But he insisted he's unconcerned about the inquiry, with Democrats facing a mountainous climb to remove Trump from office. While Democrats hold the majority in the House, Republicans control the Senate and not one GOP lawmaker in the upper chamber has signaled support for ousting Trump.

An impeachment conviction in the Senate would require 67 votes out of 100.

Still, Trump lashed out at Democratic lawmakers for scheduling the hearing while he was overseas and predicted low ratings for testimony from constitutional experts.

"These people, you almost question whether or not they love our country," Trump said of the Democrats.

Democrats argue that Trump acted improperly when he pressed Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to open an investigation of former Vice President Joe Biden and his son's dealings in the eastern European nation. Hunter Biden sat on the board of a Ukrainian energy company.

During his meeting with Merkel, Trump told reporters he didn't know why his personal attorney Rudy Giuliani was speaking with the White House Office of Management and Budget — a

revelation that was included in phone records published in the House Intelligence Committee's impeachment report.

"I really don't know," he said. Trump encouraged reporters to ask Giuliani about the calls, but insisted they are "no big deal."

Trump has frequently criticized NATO members for falling well short in doing their financial part through the first three years of his presidency, and he was eager to take credit for recent increases in defense spending by alliance members.

After a NATO summit last year, he called for members to devote at least 4% of GDP to military spending and took particular aim at Merkel, whom he accused of paying Russia "billions of dollars for gas and energy" while failing to meet her nation's commitment on defense spending.

At this year's summit, he told reporters, "I don't think, frankly, before us, that NATO was changing at all, and NATO is really changing right now."

But while NATO leaders emphasized unity, Trump convened his own sub-group of the alliance — limited to only those who had met the defense spending target.

"We call them affectionately those two percent-ers," he said of the nine nations assembled out of the soon-to-be 30-member alliance. "So this is a lunch that's on me."

Trump returned to the White House on Wednesday night.

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NATION

Wis. Guard head to be briefed on assault inquiry

By TODD RICHMOND
Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — Federal investigators plan to brief the Wisconsin National Guard's top commander this weekend on their seven-month review of the Guard's sexual assault reporting and investigation protocols, Gov. Tony Evers said Thursday in a letter to legislative leaders.

The governor said officials from the National Guard's Office of Complex Investigations plan to meet with Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar on Saturday. Evers said he will release their findings publicly after that meeting.

Evers also invited the lawmakers to attend their own OCI briefing on Monday, saying he believes it's important for them to understand the review "due to the gravity of the situation and the report's findings." He did not elaborate.

The governor and U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin in March requested a top-to-bottom review of the Guard's protocols for reporting, investigating and prosecuting sexual assault after Guard members alleged harassment, assault and retaliation for reporting incidents. The Guard received 52 reports of sexual assault between 2013 and 2017.

The Guard has been rocked by allegations of multiple sexual assaults within its ranks after Master Sgt. Jay Ellis notified Baldwin in November 2018 that he was aware of a half-dozen sexual assaults within his 115th Fighter Wing security squadron dating back to 2002. Those complaints triggered a U.S. Air Force review that is still ongoing and prompted Evers and Baldwin's request for the protocol overhaul.

Evers said in his letter Thursday that OCI investigators spoke with about 1,600 Wisconsin National Guard personnel, conducted 78 in-depth interviews, reviewed more than 1,100 documents and visited 10 military sites throughout the state.

The Capital Times newspaper obtained an excerpt from the report in which an investigator told

an alleged victim during an interview that the Wisconsin National Guard's response to her case was "an absolute train wreck."

According to the newspaper, the case involved a 2015 incident in which a male soldier sexually assaulted a female soldier after their unit was required to sleep in their armory following a night of Guard-sanctioned drinking.

The alleged perpetrator was charged with four sexual assault violations of the Wisconsin Code of Military Justice. But the military prosecutor missed several administrative deadlines and eventually failed to advance the case. The state tried to reopen the court-martial and eventually offered the alleged perpetrator a deal in which he pleaded guilty in August to one count of indecent conduct for having consensual sex with the woman rather than assaulting her.

The Guard received 52 reports of sexual assault between 2013 and 2017.

The investigator said in the report that the bungled court-martial was a result of Wisconsin National Guard officials' incompetence.

Dunbar has said the Guard has a "zero-tolerance" policy on sexual assault.

Wisconsin National Guard spokesman Joe Trovato didn't immediately respond to emails from The Associated Press seeking comment.

Ellis alleged in May that his superiors were working to discharge him from the military on trumped-up medical issues to deny him retirement benefits in retaliation for sparking the two federal investigations. He appealed and traveled to Randolph Air Force Base in Texas on Monday to appear before a medical review board.

He said Thursday that he has won his appeal and will be returned to regular duty.

SpaceX launches caring robot, beer malt, 'mighty mice' and holiday treats

By MARCIA DUNN
Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — SpaceX launched a 3-ton shipment to the International Space Station on Thursday, including "mighty mice" for a muscle study, a robot sensitive to astronauts' emotions and a miniature version of a brewery's malthouse.

The Dragon capsule also is delivering holiday goodies for the six station residents. NASA's Kenny Todd isn't giving any hints, but said, "Santa's sleigh, I think, is certified for the vacuum of space."



Specialist Meric Greenbaum works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange as Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., makes a statement at the Capitol in Washington, on Thursday.

Pelosi: Dems move forward on impeachment as the GOP holds steadfast alongside Trump

FROM FRONT PAGE

Pelosi emphasized the Russia angle at a news conference later, saying that it's Russia and President Vladimir Putin who benefited most from Trump's actions toward Ukraine.

"All roads lead to Putin. Understand that," she declared. "That was the a-ha moment."

Asked as she was leaving if she hates Trump, Pelosi stiffened, returned to the podium and responded sharply that the president's views and politics are for the voters at elections to judge, but "this is about the Constitution." She said that as a Catholic, she does not hate the president but rather is praying for him daily.

Trump tweeted that if Democrats are "going to impeach me, do it now, fast." He said he wanted to get on to a "fair trial" in the Senate. The president also said that Democrats have "gone crazy."

At the White House, press secretary Stephanie Grisham tweeted that Pelosi and the Democrats "should be ashamed," then she, too, looked past the likely impeachment in the Democratic-majority House to trial in the Republican-controlled Senate.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., criticized Democrats for focusing on impeachment over other issues, although many House-passed bills are waiting for action in his chamber. "It's all impeachment, all the time," he said.

Drafting articles of impeachment is a milestone moment, only

the fourth time in U.S. history Congress has tried to remove a president, and it intensifies the deeply partisan undertaking that is consuming Washington and dividing the nation.

Once reluctant to pursue impeachment, warning it was too divisive for the country and needed to be a bipartisan endeavor, Pelosi is now leading Congress into politically riskier waters for all sides ahead of an election year.

Republicans are standing lockstep with Trump, unwilling to be swayed by his actions aimed at wrongdoing, let alone impeachable offenses, leaving Democrats to go it alone in a campaign to consider removing the 45th president from office.

Trump's allies argue that voters, not lawmakers, should decide the president's future. But Democrats say the nation cannot wait for the 2020 election, alleging Trump's past efforts to have foreign countries intervene in the presidential campaign is forcing them to act to prevent him from doing it again.

The number of articles of impeachment and the allegations they will include will be both a legal and political exercise as lawmakers balance political dynamics while striving to hit the Constitution's bar of "treason, bribery or other high crimes and misdemeanors."

Pulling from the House's investigation, Democrats are focusing on at least three areas.

They argue that Trump abused the power of his office by putting

personal political gain over national security interests, engaging in bribery by holding out \$400 million in military aid that Congress had approved for Ukraine; and then obstructing Congress by stonewalling the investigation.

Some liberal Democrats want to reach further into Trump's actions, particularly regarding the findings from special counsel Robert Mueller's report on Russian interference in the 2016 election. That could produce an additional article of obstruction not only of Congress but also of justice.

But more centrist and moderate Democrats, those lawmakers who are most at risk of political fallout from the impeachment proceedings, prefer to stick with the Ukraine matter as a simpler narrative that Americans can more easily understand.

The chairmen of the House committees conducting the impeachment inquiry will begin drafting the articles, and some lawmakers are expecting to remain in Washington over the weekend.

Members are preparing to vote on the articles of impeachment in the Judiciary Committee, possibly as soon as next week. The committee set a Monday hearing to receive the Intelligence Committee's 300-page report outlining the findings against the president.

The House is expecting a full vote by Christmas. The would send the issue to the Senate for a trial in the new year.

large, plastic 3-D printed robot head with artificial intelligence, according to its German creators. It's named Cimon, pronounced Simon, the same as the prototype that flew up last year. This upgraded version is designed to show empathy to its human colleagues in orbit.

The recycled capsule should arrive Sunday.

The Falcon rocket blasted off from Cape Canaveral a day late because of high winds. SpaceX aimed to recover the new booster on a barge just off the coast in the Atlantic so it could be reused.

This is SpaceX's 19th supply

run for NASA.

Forty mice are aboard all adolescent females with black fur. Eight of them are genetically engineered with double the normal amount of muscle. There are also barley grains for a beer-malting experiment by Anheuser-Busch.

The shipment also includes a

NATION



KATHY WILLENS/AP

The Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree, was illuminated in the 87th annual tree lighting ceremony, on Wednesday, in New York.

Christmas tree lights up Rockefeller Center

Associated Press

NEW YORK — One of the brightest signs of the holiday season has come to light. The Rockefeller Center Christmas tree was officially turned on Wednesday night, at an event featuring celebrities including Idina Menzel, Lea Michele and Ne-Yo among the performers.

The tree, a Norway spruce that's more than 60 years old, stands 77 feet tall and was lit up

in colorful Christmas lights before 10 p.m.

The tree was decorated with miles of lights, with a huge Swarovski crystal star at the top. It stays in place until Jan. 17, when it will be taken down and donated to Habitat for Humanity to help build homes.

There's been a tree in Rockefeller Center since 1931. The holiday lighting has been broadcast since 1951.

Trump declares Camp David for the G-7 summit next year

The Washington Post

President Donald Trump will host global leaders at Camp David next year after giving up on early plans to hold the annual summit at his private resort in Doral, Fla.

Trump made the announcement Tuesday during a meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in London, where leaders are gathered for a NATO summit.

The United States is slated to host the Group of Seven meeting in 2020, and Trump had announced that he'd chosen his Florida golf resort after a supposed search for properties yielded nothing better. Criticism of the decision was swift, even from within his own party, and Trump gave in to the pressure to reverse course.

"We're going to do it at Camp David, and we'll be doing some special things at Camp David," Trump said. "It's nearby, it's close. We're going to give really great access to the press, you'll have great access. And we'll have a little bit of a Washington deliverance. But it will be at Camp David, which is a place people like."

The White House had previously panned suggestions that he host at Camp David in Maryland, as President Barack Obama had in 2012.

"I understand the folks who participated in it hated it and thought it was a miserable place to have the G-7," acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney had said in an Oct. 17 news conference. "It was way too small. It was way too remote."

Official calls for probe into \$400M border deal

By Nick Miroff
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security on Wednesday called for an investigation into a \$400 million border wall contract awarded this week to North Dakota-based Fisher Sand and Gravel, a company President Donald Trump personally urged military officials to hire.

In a letter to the Defense Department Office of Inspector General, Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., said there are reasons to be suspicious of the decision to bestow such a large contract on the company. Thompson cited Trump's repeated promotion of Fisher to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and a recent visit by the acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to a span of privately financed barrier the firm built outside El Paso, Texas.

These actions raise concerns about the possibility of inappropriate influence on USACE's contracting decision," Thompson wrote. "Therefore, I am requesting that you review the award of this contract to ensure that the bid submitted by Fisher Sand and Gravel Co. met the solicitation standards and that USACE made the award in accordance with federal procurement law and regulations."

On Monday, the Defense Department said the Army Corps had selected Fisher to build 31 linear miles of new border barrier across the southern edge of the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge near Yuma, Ariz.

Fisher's price tag — approximately \$13 million per mile — was lower than the two other companies that bid on the contract, according to one administration official with knowledge of the contract.

The Fisher contract met the technical specifications of the Army Corps request, the official said, and because the company's bid was the lowest, the government was obligated to select the firm, absent a determination that Fisher had submitted an unrealistic bid.

Fisher was not among the companies the Army Corps initially selected as qualified bidders on nearly \$10 billion in contracts for border barrier construction. But CEO Tommy Fisher made repeat appearances on Fox News and elsewhere to promote his company, claiming his crews could

build the structure faster and for less money.

Fisher, a GOP donor, also enlisted Sen. Kevin Cramer, R-N.D., to personally lobby the president. Cramer accused the Army Corps of treating Fisher unfairly, and at one point he stalled the confirmation of a White House budget office nominee to force military officials to provide copies of other construction firms' contract bids.

Last month, Fisher was included for the first time in the pool of qualified eligible bidders, and the \$400 million is the company's only major border wall contract to date.

Asked about Thompson's concerns over inappropriate influence, Cramer responded in an email: "You'd have to ask the (Army Corps) about the process."

"It's my understanding from General Semonte that Fisher, a prequalified bidder, responded to the (request for proposals) with an acceptable design with the low bid," he said, referring to the head of the Army Corps.

Raini Brunson, a spokesperson for the Army Corps, said in an email that the agency "will fully cooperate with a review of our contracting process."

668,000 will lose their food stamp benefits under tighter work rules

By Juliet Lindester
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Hundreds of thousands of Americans who rely on the federal food stamp program will lose their benefits under a new Trump administration rule that will tighten work requirements for recipients.

The move by the administration is the latest in its attempt to scale back the social safety net for low-income Americans. It is the first of three proposed rules targeting the Supplemental Nutrition Program, known as SNAP, to be finalized. The program feeds more than 36 million people.

The plan, announced Wednesday, will limit states from exempting work-eligible adults from having to maintain steady employment in order to receive benefits.

The Agriculture Department estimates the change would save roughly \$5.5 billion over five years and cut benefits for roughly 688,000 SNAP recipients. That's down from its original estimate that 750,000 people would lose benefits.

Under current rules, work-eligible able-bodied adults without dependents and between the ages of 18 and 49 can currently re-

ceive only three months of SNAP benefits in a three-year period if they don't meet the 20-hour work requirement. But states with high unemployment rates or a demonstrable lack of sufficient jobs can waive those time limits.

The new rule imposes stricter criteria states must meet in order to issue waivers.

Under the plan, states can only issue waivers if a city or county has an unemployment rate of 6% or higher. The waivers will be good for one year and will require the governor to support the request.

The final rule will be published in the federal register Thursday, and go into effect in April.

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue said the rule will help move people "from welfare to work."

"We want to encourage people by giving them a helping hand, but not an infinitely giving hand," he said.

Congressional Democrats and advocates for the poor were quick

to condemn the administration's actions.

Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., said the plan will only serve to punish workers whose jobs are seasonal or unreliable.

"This administration is out of touch with families who are struggling to make ends meet by working seasonal jobs or part-time jobs with unreliable hours," said Stabenow, the top Democrat on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

House Republicans unsuccessfully pushed to include SNAP work requirement provisions in last year's farm bill. Stabenow said "there's a reason" they didn't make it into the final version.

Robert Greenstein, president of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, said the rule would disproportionately affect minorities. He urged better job training and a higher minimum wage instead.

"Denying them basic food and nutrition is not the route that a fair and compassionate administration of either party should take," he said in a statement.

James D. Weill, president of the Food Research and Action Center, said the plan is "deeply flawed and ill-conceived" and would lead to higher rates of hunger and poverty.

NATION

Judge: Purdue workers should receive bonuses

Associated Press

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. — More time is needed to sort out whether the CEO of OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma should receive a \$1.3 million bonus next year, but the company should be allowed to pay about \$35 million in bonuses to 682 other employees, the judge overseeing the company's bankruptcy case said Wednesday.

There were objections at the hearing only to payments to CEO Craig Landau and a group of nine other upper-level "insider" employees. State governments and a watchdog committee didn't dispute the company's contention that bonuses would be needed to keep employees working and the company running — especially after the company agreed to trim many of the bonuses.

Judge Robert Drain said he would sign an order for all the employees except Landau to get bonuses next year. He said it would contain a provision that it could be withheld from anyone found liable in lawsuits over the toll of the opioid crisis linked to more than 400,000 deaths in the U.S. since 2000.

Purdue, based in Stamford, Conn., is in bankruptcy court as part of an effort to settle more than 2,700 lawsuits it's facing over the toll of the opioids.

Drain said officials with the company and other interested parties should continue to discuss whether it's appropriate for Landau, who has run the company since 2017, to receive a performance bonus on top of his \$2.6 million base salary.

Drain said on the bench that he wasn't especially moved by the contention from a group of 24 states that Landau should have his pay docked because of a possibility that he could be held liable in the future.

But he said he was concerned when it was revealed at the hearing that the CEO's base salary was doubled in 2018 shortly after the company hired a law firm to consult on filing for bankruptcy — and that the same year, he received \$6 million of the \$12 million in retention payments that he had been scheduled to get from 2020 through 2026.

Purdue lawyer Marshall Huenber said those changes were not a tricky move to pay the CEO more with the possibility of bankruptcy looming but rather part of bigger changes to his compensation that includes a reduced severance package if he leaves the drugmaker.

In the hearing, Landau's lawyer, Linda Imes, said Landau, a medical doctor who joined Purdue in 1999 and became CEO in 2017 after a stint running its Canadian sister company, was behind a decision last year to stop marketing opioids to doctors.

"Dr. Landau is a star, and he is a star that Purdue should have working for it in this challenging time," she said.

In their lawsuits, Colorado and Massachusetts allege that Landau blamed the dangers of opioids on patients rather than the drugs and that he knowingly put patients at risk by having his sales team encourage more prescribing of the drug without disclosing the addiction risks.

They say he pushed opioids for elderly patients and those who had never taken them before without disclosing their risks, falsely claimed that a version of OxyContin that was reformulated to make it harder for people to break down and misuse was safe, and pushed doctors to prescribe opioids for a longer period of time.

Purdue and Landau deny the claims.



Will Dickey, The Florida Times-Union/AP

Transgender teen Drew Adams leaves the U.S. Courthouse with his mother, Erica Adams Kasper, in 2017 after the first day of his trial about bathroom rights at Nease High School, in Jacksonville, Fla.

Court to consider bathroom use by transgender student

Associated Press

ATLANTA — A transgender student's fight over school bathrooms was to come before a federal appeals court Thursday, setting the stage for a ground-breaking ruling.

The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta was to hear arguments about whether a Florida school district should be ordered to allow students to use the bathroom that matches their gender identity.

Drew Adams, who has since graduated from Nease High School in Ponte Vedra, won a lower court ruling last year ordering the St. Johns County school district to allow him to use the boys' restroom. The district has appealed, arguing that although it will permit transgender students to use single-occupancy, gender-neutral restrooms, it shouldn't be forced to let students use the restroom of the gender they identify with.

The 11th Circuit could become the first federal appeals court to issue a binding ruling on the issue, which has arisen in several states. The ruling would cover schools in Florida, Georgia and Alabama, and could carry the issue to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The 4th Circuit had ruled in favor of a Virginia student, but the Supreme Court sent the case back down for further consideration. That's because the U.S. Department of Education, under President

Donald Trump, withdrew guidance that said federal law called for treating transgender students equally, including allowing them to use the bathroom that matches their gender identity.

Adams transitioned from female to male before starting his freshman year at the high school just outside Jacksonville. He said he used the boys' restroom without incident for weeks until several girls complained. He and his mother eventually sued in federal court, winning an order after a bench trial that he could use the boys' restroom.

Now a student at the University of Central Florida, Adams told The Associated Press in a phone interview Tuesday, "I really think it is going to take the courts to change it."

The district argues that Adams is not a boy and that he should be excluded from the boys' bathroom because those born as boys have "the right to be free from exposing one's private and personal space and undressed and partially clothed body to members of the opposite sex."

The trial judge rejected this argument, finding that Adams would use a stall and that no breach of privacy would occur. "Plaintiff's anatomy has no relevance to his ability to use the boys' restroom," wrote Adams' lawyer, Tara Borelli of Lambda legal. "Defendant's witnesses conceded at trial that Drew is treated differently because he is transgender, which is sex discrimination."

Rapper T.I.'s recent remarks spark New York bill to end virginity tests

Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York could bar doctors from performing so-called virginity tests under legislation prompted by the rapper T.I.'s controversial claim that he has a gynecologist check his daughter's hymen annually.

Assemblywoman Michaele Solages said Tuesday the bill she submitted last month would prohibit medical professionals from performing or supervising such examinations, though it's unclear how common they are in the U.S. New York would also consider if sexual assault when such tests are performed outside of a medical setting.

"It's medically unnecessary," the Democrat said. "It's often painful, humiliating,

traumatic. All in all, it's a form of violence against women."

Her bill has attracted support from three Democratic lawmakers, and Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration officials called the practice "disturbing." Solages said no other states have such bans.

The World Health Organization, U.N. Women and the U.N. Human Rights office called for the end of the tests worldwide last year. They said the testing often involves inspecting the hymen or inserting



T.I.

fingers into the vagina.

T.I., also known as Clifford Joseph Harris Jr., drew criticism when he said in a November episode of the podcast "Ladies like Us" that he asked a gynecologist to check his teenage daughter's hymen shortly after her birthday each year. She is now 18.

"I put a sticky note on the door: 'Gyno. Tomorrow. 9:30,'" Harris said.

After his comments prompted backlash on social media, he told Jada Pinkett Smith on the Facebook interview show Red Table Talk he'd been exaggerating and that "he was never in any exam room."

Phone and email messages were left with Harris' publicist Tuesday.

Experts say such testing is painful and that there's no evidence such testing shows

whether a woman or girl has had vaginal intercourse.

"There is no test that can tell you whether someone had intercourse, whether consensually or non-consensually," said Ranit Mishori, professor of family medicine at Georgetown University School of Medicine and senior medical adviser for Physicians for Human Rights.

Mishori said there's a mistaken belief that you can tell whether someone's had vaginal intercourse from a tear in a hymen, which can also tear from tampons or physical activity.

Some women lack a hymen, a membrane that partly covers vaginas and can also change as a girl matures due to hormonal change.

NATION

Bloomberg's new ad campaign focuses on ability to beat Trump

By STEVE PEOPLES
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Billionaire Democrat Michael Bloomberg is putting tens of millions of more dollars behind a new television ad casting himself as uniquely qualified to defeat President Donald Trump.

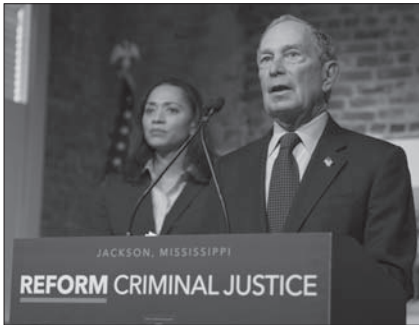
The ad is set to begin running Wednesday in all 50 states, including the first four on the presidential primary calendar.

The former New York City mayor, who entered the presidential race less than two weeks ago, launched his White House bid by introducing himself to voters across America in an initial national advertising campaign backed by close to \$40 million. The spending behind the new one is being described as consistent with the first, although Bloomberg's team would not disclose the specific dollar amount.

The first ad highlighted Bloomberg's life story, including his success in business and philanthropy. The one that begins Wednesday focuses on his success fighting America's gun lobby, "big coal" and "big tobacco." If he can win those fights, the narrator in the ad says, he can beat Trump.

The new ad, set to run for the next two weeks, replaces the first one and runs on national television across all 50 states and roughly 100 local markets across the country. Bloomberg has said he is not competing in the first four states on the primary calendar — Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina — although the ad will air in those states, according to a spokesman.

The spokesman noted that



SARAH WARNOCK, THE CLARION-LEDGER/AP
Democratic presidential candidate and former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's second 2020 campaign ad focuses on his success fighting America's gun lobby, "big coal" and "big tobacco."

Bloomberg's plans for the first four states have not changed. He will not appear on the ballot in any of them.

Still, Bloomberg's plan calls for "much deeper buys" in states that hold primary contests in March, particularly the first Tuesday of the month, dubbed "Super Tuesday." Bloomberg's vast personal wealth has proven to be both an asset and a liability in the Democratic primary contest.

Bloomberg's 2020 rivals have accused him of trying to buy the election, although his team insists his strategy allows him to avoid being influenced by any special interests. He's refusing to accept any political donations, relying instead on his personal fortune

that's estimated to exceed \$50 billion.

In the new ad, Bloomberg is seizing on what Democratic voters consistently say is the most important quality they want in a presidential nominee: the ability to beat Trump. But it's unclear if his message will overcome skepticism about his political past. Bloomberg formally registered as a Democrat only last year after spending much of the last two decades as a Republican and an independent.

"Mike Bloomberg's never been afraid of tough fights — the ones that make a true difference in people's lives," the new ad says. "And Mike's won them."

Marines reminded of election rules of engagement

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

With political campaigns ramping up and presidential impeachment efforts underway, the Marine Corps issued a reminder about what political activities its members can engage in legally, including what's acceptable to tweet, "gram" and otherwise share on social media.

The memo, published Monday, tracks with similar guidance put out to all the military services at least since 2015, and adheres to ethics guidelines the Defense Department's Office of the General Counsel published in April 2018.

As in past years, the Marine Corps' guidance makes clear that active duty troops are allowed to vote, express their opinions, encourage others to vote and sport bumper stickers on their vehicles. They can even dash off a sharply worded letter to the editor.

Voicing such views via social media should be treated the same as a letter to the newspaper, the memo states. But accounts that identify the user as active duty must explicitly state that any views expressed are not those of the Marine Corps, it warns.

The new memo outlines other longstanding limits on political activities online and in person, which are more restrictive for uniformed service members than

for others.

Troops cannot, for example, post direct links to a political party or partisan candidate, campaign or cause. And while they can "like," "friend" or "follow" a partisan candidate on social media, they cannot encourage others to do so.

"Such activity is akin to distributing literature on behalf of those entities, which is prohibited," the memo states.

The social media guidance does not apply to servicemembers who are not on active duty, as long as they don't act in a way "that could reasonably create the appearance of official sponsorship, approval, or endorsement by the DoD or the Marine Corps," it states.

Troops are barred from using federal equipment or duty time for political activities, but even off-duty and on personal devices, both servicemembers and civilian employees are barred from sending or forwarding political emails or posting political messages to social media while in a federal building.

Active duty service members are also prohibited from activities like stuffing envelopes or manning phone banks for political candidates, fundraising on their behalf, or displaying large signs in a personal vehicle or at on-base housing.

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Booker's critical test? Campaign eyes a rebound

Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — The news of Kamala Harris' sudden departure from the presidential race came during an all-star conference call led from Cory Booker's campaign headquarters in Newark, N.J., New Jersey city that he led for seven years and that propelled him to national fame. Within hours, Booker dictated a message calling Harris "my friend and my sister," and a directive was issued to show her team respect at a difficult moment.

The campaign also scheduled a high-profile speech in Iowa.

Booker's aides have been careful to emphasize that the New Jersey senator isn't looking to capitalize on the collapse of his Senate colleague's White House bid. But they're also aware that for a campaign languishing in the polls, this may be one of their last opportunities to turn things around.

"We have all the kindling on the fire. All it takes is one match,



Booker

and I think we will take off," Booker campaign manager Addisu Demisse said in an interview with The Associated Press.

They hope that Thursday's speech in Des Moines, Iowa's capital city, could be the spark. With less than two months before the Iowa caucuses open the Democratic contest, Booker plans to talk about what Harris' departure means for the party. He's also expected to argue that he's best positioned to take on President Donald Trump because he can rebuild the multiracial coalition that twice elected Barack Obama, a theme Harris hit last month during what would be her final debate performance.

Booker, who is black, will likely critique the dwindling diversity of

the Democratic field. On Wednesday, he blasted a process that led to a field with "more billionaires — than black people."

It's a last-ditch attempt by a candidate who has struggled to gain traction — and could face pressure to leave the race if he doesn't qualify for the next debate this month. Even some of his supporters, such as Iowa state Rep. Jennifer Konradi, are skeptical about whether he can make it, with just eight days remaining until the qualification window closes.

"The polling threshold is tough," she said.

The most recent Des Moines Register/CNN poll of likely Iowa caucusgoers, conducted in mid-November, showed Booker with just 3% support, around where he's been throughout his campaign.

Carol Fowler, a veteran South Carolina Democratic activist, said that Booker recently received a warm reception during an event she hosted for him at her home —

but that missing the debate would be dire for his campaign.

"I think any of them, at this point, who don't get in the debate, it's hard for them to make a case for themselves for why they should stay in," she said. "And I think if they don't make the debate, they won't be able to raise money to keep going."

This wasn't supposed to be Booker's conundrum. As Newark's mayor, he garnered headlines for shoveling snow and saving a woman from a house fire. His narrative as an Ivy League-educated Rhodes scholar with a compelling personal background and rhetorical skills compared to those of Obama only solidified his status as a Democratic rising star.

But if moving to the Senate was intended to bolster Booker's credentials for an eventual presidential campaign, that hasn't panned out. Pete Buttigieg, another mayor educated at top universities who also earned a Rhodes scholarship, has instead emerged

as the fresh face in the race.

Booker's also faced challenges raising money during the campaign, posting a middle-of-the-pack \$6 million haul in the third quarter after making a last-minute fundraising plea in which he warned supporters he'd have to raise nearly \$2 million or drop out of the race. Those fundraising struggles mean Booker hasn't been able to run paid advertising until this past weekend, when he launched a six-figure digital and radio ad buy.

Booker is among several candidates who have quietly begun to reach out to Harris' donors after her departure, according to a donor with direct knowledge of the outreach. The New York-based donor, who has worked with Booker in the past and had ties to the Harris campaign, reports early signs that Harris' financial backers in the New York area are more inclined to move toward Joe Biden or Buttigieg. The donor spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

NATION

Climate change upends Everglades restoration

By ALLEN G. BREED

Associated Press

FLAMINGO, Fla. — Grabbing a clump of vegetation to steady herself, Tiffany Troxler gingerly slides her feet along the makeshift boardwalk as she ventures out into the marsh. The boards sag, dipping her up to her knees in the tea-colored water.

"This is the treacherous part," the Florida International University researcher says. "The water levels are up."

To a layman, this patch of brown-green saw grass and button mangrove deep inside Everglades National Park looks healthy enough, but Troxler knows trouble lurks just beneath the murky surface. She points to a clump of grass: Beneath the water line, the soil has retreated about a foot, leaving the root mass exposed. It is evidence that the thick mat of peat supporting this ecosystem is collapsing — and research suggests encroaching sea water is to blame.

"You can think about these soils as your bank account," says Troxler, associate director of FIU's Sea Level Solutions Center. "In the condition that this marsh is right now, the outlook is not good."

Formed roughly 5,000 years ago, during a time of sea level rise, the Everglades once comprised an area twice the size of New Jersey.

But over the course of just the last century, about half of the Everglades' original footprint has been lost — plowed under or paved over, never to be recovered, so long as South Florida's 8 million human inhabitants claim it for their homes, livelihoods and recreation.

The glades have been sapped by canals and dams that remapped the landscape and altered animal habitats, polluted by upstream agricultural areas, transformed by invasive species. And now, rising sea levels — this time, caused by man — threaten to undo what it took nature millennia to build.

What survives is not so much a natural ecosystem, but a remnant, heavily dependent on — and at the mercy of — a network of more than 2,100 miles of canals, 2,000 miles of levees and hundreds of floodgates, pump stations and other water-control structures.

What the Army Corps of Engineers calls a "highly managed system," others have sarcastically labeled a "Disney Everglades."

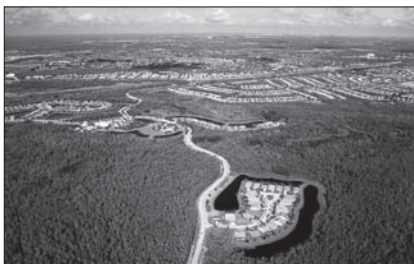
Nearly two decades and \$4 billion into the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, an ambitious federal-state program adopted in 2000, new data about the pace of climate change have called into question how much of the Everglades can ever be salvaged — and what that even means.

"I tend to think that everything can be saved," says Fred Sklar of the South Florida Water Management District, which monitors and runs much of the Everglades' infrastructure. "Restored is another question."

"Here are no lofty peaks seeking the sky, no mighty glaciers or rushing streams wearing away the uplifted land," President Harry S. Truman said in a 1947 address dedicating Everglades National Park. "Here is land, tranquil in its quiet beauty, serving not as the source of water, but as the last receiver of it. To its natural abundance we owe the spectacular plant and animal life that distinguishes this place from all others in our country."

At the center of it all was Lake Okechobee, the Everglades' 730-square-mile "liquid heart."

Today, we understand that natural systems like the untouched Everglades pro-



Above: Tour guide Gianni Magrini pilots a saw grass marsh in Everglades National Park in October. **Left:** A housing development built in Everglades wetlands is seen from the air near Naples, Fla.

PHOTOS BY ROBERT F. BUKATY/AP

vide enormous benefits — water filtration, nurseries for fish and other wildlife, protection from storm surges, even carbon sequestration. But to 19th-century Floridians, all that water — and the mosquitoes and reptiles it harbored — represented an impediment to progress.

And so when Florida became a state in 1845, one of the Legislature's first acts was to pass a resolution asking Congress to survey the "wholly valueless" Everglades "with a view to their reclamation."

Beginning in earnest during the 1880s, a host of entities set about draining the swamp. They dug canals east and west from Lake Okechobee, carrying nutrient-laden water that altered the salinity of coastal estuaries and caused toxic algae blooms. They seeded the wetlands from the air with a thirsty, paper-barked Australian tree called melaleuca. The vast cutland apple forest that girded the lake's southern shore was torched, burning so fiercely that it set the very earth on fire.

Peat soils that had accumulated over thousands of years dried up and blew away. The result: At the University of Florida Research Station in Belle Glade, a concrete marker driven through the organic soil down to the limestone substrate shows the ground has sunk 6 feet since 1924.

And still, the tinkering went on.

In the 1960s, the Corps began straightening the meandering, flood-prone Kissimmee River. Lined by wetlands so lush that they were known as "the Little Everglades," the shallow, 130-mile river was what one wildlife expert called a "nursery ground for sport fishes." By 1971, engineers had straightened the once free-flow-

ing stream into a 56-mile, 30-foot-deep canal bureaucratically designated as the C-38.

But it was an event in 1928 that, as much as any, altered the Everglades' course. That year, a hurricane overwhelmed the flimsy dike along Lake Okechobee's southern shore, causing a deluge that killed 3,000 people, most of them poor, black farmworkers. The resulting 143-mile, 30-foot-high Herbert Hoover Dike now nearly completely surrounds the lake, permanently severing its connection to the park.

The Corps' primary mandate was to protect people, not the environment. As the narrator put it in the 1950s documentary "Waters of Destiny," the agency saw itself as victorious in a war against nature:

"Water that once ran wild. Water that ruined the rich terrain. Water that took lives and land. Put disaster in the headlines and death upon the soil. Now, it just waits there. Calm, peaceful. Ready to do the bidding of man and his machines."

Scientists estimate that more than 650 billion gallons of fresh water a year once flowed south into what is now Everglades National Park. Today, that flow is about 280 billion gallons.

Flash forward to the present day, when many of the same canals and levees and pumps that helped drain the Everglades are now being used to try to save them. Alongside the Everglades Agricultural Area, the 700,000-acre checkerboard of sugar cane and winter vegetable fields south of Lake Okechobee, huge tracts are being converted to store and clean water for use when and where it is needed.

Perhaps the biggest step toward that end

so far is the re-engineering of Tamiami Trail, the east-west highway that essentially has acted as a dike through the heart of the Everglades since the 1920s. Since 2013, workers have elevated 3.3 miles of the roadway, allowing water to flow freely into Shark River Slough, historically the deepest and wettest part of the Everglades.

"We're starting to see the vegetation respond, and we're getting more of those marsh grasses, more of those open water sloughs," says Stephen Davis, senior ecologist with the Everglades Foundation. "I'm very confident that we can restore this ecosystem. And by restoration, I mean enhancing the functionality of what remains."

"We're on the threshold of seeing whether the previous 20 years of work will pay off," says William Nuttle, a consultant with the University of Maryland's Center for Environmental Science who began his career in the marshlands of South Florida.

But time is not on the Everglades' side.

Over the past decade, scientists began noticing an alarming trend in the wetlands near the park's southwest tip — "potholes" of open water filled with dead vegetation. Seawater, Nuttle says, was causing vast areas of once-healthy saw grass prairie "to unravel like a moth-eaten wool sweater."

A lack of fresh water from the north and the intrusion of seawater have boosted salinity levels in the marshes, Troxler and others say, which appears to be hindering plant growth.

Scientists are counting on mangroves and other more salt-tolerant plants to migrate inland into the saw grass plains, establishing a new, natural bulwark against climate change. But that change may already be outpacing nature's — and man's — ability to counter it: When the restoration plan was adopted in 2000, its authors were anticipating seas to rise only 6 inches by 2050. They've since already risen 5 inches.

In its most recent report to Congress, a panel of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine urged a sweeping reassessment of restoration projects, warning that the current work is lagging behind the pace of climate change and could take 65 years to complete at the current funding levels.

"At this pace of restoration, it is even more imperative that agencies anticipate and design for the Everglades of the future," they wrote.

When the Everglades restoration plan was adopted in 2000, it aimed to turn back the clock to the pre-drainage wilderness it once was. But in the face of rising seas, along with fluctuating temperatures and rainfall distribution, experts agree there is no going back.

"Everglades restoration has always been an ambitious and complex endeavor," the National Academies of Sciences panel wrote. "Our current review emphasizes how it is also dynamic and the importance of focusing restoration on the future Everglades, rather than on the past Everglades."

Earlier this year, an interagency group that includes the Corps of Engineers and the National Park Service, issued its latest Everglades System Status Report — and it was not cheery.

"Overall, the Florida Everglades is struggling to survive in the face of sustained pressure from human activities and the increasing impacts of climate change," the group wrote.

"The poor to fair scores reflected in the report card indicate that the region's ecosystems are degraded and the anticipated ecological benefits of restoration are still to be realized."

SCIENCE AND MEDICINE

Sun-skimming spacecraft surprises scientists

By MARCIA DUNN
Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — NASA's sun-skimming spacecraft, the Parker Solar Probe, is surprising scientists with its unprecedented close views of our star.

Scientists released the first results from the mission Wednesday. They observed bursts of energetic particles never seen before on such a small scale as well as switchback-like reversals in the out-flowing solar magnetic field that seem to whip up the solar wind.

NASA's Nicola Fox compared this unexpected switchback phenomenon to the cracking of a whip.

"They're striking and it's hard to not think that they're somehow important in the whole problem," said Stuart Bale of the University of California, Berkeley, who was part of the team.

Researchers said they also finally have evidence of a dust-free zone encircling the sun. Farther out, there's so much dust from vaporizing comets and asteroids that one of 80 small viewfinders on one instrument was pierced by a grain earlier this year.

"I can't say that we don't worry about the spacecraft. I mean, the spacecraft is going through an environment that we've never been before," Fox said.

Launched in 2018, Parker has come within 15 million miles of

the sun and will get increasingly closer — within 4 million miles — over the next six years. It's completed three of 24 orbits of the sun, dipping well into the corona, or upper atmosphere. The goal of the mission is to shed light on some of the mysteries surrounding the sun.

Parker will sweep past Venus on Dec. 26 for the second gravity-assist of the \$1.5 billion mission and make its fourth close solar encounter in January.

The findings in the journal *Nature* were made during a relatively quiet phase of solar activity.

"We're just starting to scratch the surface of this fascinating physics," said Princeton University's David McComas, the chief scientist of one of the spacecraft's instruments.

As Parker gets even closer to its target, the sun will go through an active phase "so we can expect even more exciting results soon," University College London's Daniel Verscharen wrote in an accompanying editorial. Verscharen was not part of the mission.

Over the summer, Fox shared these early results with solar astrophysicist Eugene Parker, 92, professor emeritus at the University of Chicago for whom the spacecraft is named. He expressed excitement — "wow" — and was keen to be involved.

It's the first NASA spacecraft to be named after a person still alive. Parker attended its launch last year from Cape Canaveral.



This image taken from video animation provided by NASA shows flips in the direction of the magnetic field embedded in the solar wind that flows out from the Sun, as detected by the NASA's Parker Solar Probe's **FIELDS** instrument.

NASA, GODDARD, CIL/AP



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Spike seen in face injuries linked to cellphone use

By LINDSEY TANNER
Associated Press

Add facial cuts, bruises and fractures to the risks from cellphones and carelessly using them.

That's according to a study published Thursday that found a spike in U.S. emergency room treatment for these mostly minor injuries.

The research was led by a facial plastic surgeon whose patients include a woman who broke her nose when she dropped her phone on her face. Dr. Boris Pashkover of Rutgers New Jersey Medical School said his experience treating patients with cellphone injuries prompted him to look into the problem.

Pashkover and others analyzed 20 years of emergency room data and found an increase in cellphone injuries starting after 2006, around the time when the first smartphones were introduced.

Some injuries were caused by phones themselves, including people getting hit by a thrown phone. But Pashkover said many were caused by distracted use including texting while walking, tripping and landing face-down on the sidewalk.

Most patients in the study

were not hospitalized, but the researchers said the problem should be taken seriously.

The study involved cases in a U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission database that collects emergency room visit information from about 100 hospitals. The researchers tallied 2,500 patients with cellphone-related head and neck injuries from 1998 through 2017.

The study was published in the journal *JAMA Otolaryngology*.

Nationwide, they estimated there were about 76,000 people injured during that time. Annual cases totaled fewer than 2,000 until 2006, but increased steeply after that. About 40% of those injured were ages 13 to 29, and many were hurt while walking, texting or driving.

Cellphone use also has been linked with repetitive strain injuries in the hands and neck, and injuries to other parts of the body caused by distracted use.

"I love my smartphone," Pashkover said, but he added that it's easy to get too absorbed and avoiding injury requires common sense.

"People wouldn't walk around reading a magazine," he said. "Be careful."

WORLD

List reveals 629 Pakistani girls sold as brides to China

By KATHY GANNON
Associated Press

LAHORE, Pakistan — Page after page, the names stack up: 629 girls and women from across Pakistan who were sold as brides to Chinese men and taken to China. The list, obtained by The Associated Press, was compiled by Pakistani investigators determined to break up trafficking networks exploiting the country's poor and vulnerable.

The list gives the most concrete figure yet for the number of women caught up in the trafficking schemes since 2018.

But since the time it was put together in June, investigators' aggressive drive against the networks has largely ground to a halt. Officials with knowledge of the investigations say that is because of pressure from government officials fearful of hurting Pakistan's lucrative ties to Beijing.

The biggest case against traffickers has fallen apart. In October, a court in Faisalabad acquitted 31 Chinese nationals charged in connection with trafficking. Several of the women who had initially been interviewed by police refused to testify because they were either threatened or bribed into silence, according to a court official and a police investigator familiar with the case. The two spoke on condition of anonymity because they feared retribution for speaking out.

At the same time, the government has sought to curtail investigations, putting "immense pressure" on officials from the Federal Investigation Agency pursuing trafficking networks, said Saleem Iqbal, a Christian activist who has helped parents rescue several young girls from China and prevented others from being sent there.

"Some (FIA officials) were even transferred," Iqbal said in an interview. "When we talk to Pakistani rulers, they don't pay any attention."

Asked about the complaints, Pakistan's interior and foreign ministries refused to comment.

Several senior officials familiar with the events said investigations into trafficking have slowed, the investigators are frustrated, and Pakistani media have been pushed to curb their reporting on trafficking. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they feared reprisals.

China's Foreign Ministry said it was unaware of the list.

An AP investigation earlier this year revealed how Pakistan's Christian minority has become a new target of brokers who pay impoverished parents to marry off their daughters, some of them teenagers, to Chinese husbands who return with them to their homeland. Many of the brides are then isolated and abused or forced into prostitution in China, often

‘The Chinese and Pakistani brokers make between 4 million and 10 million rupees (\$25,000 and \$65,000) from the groom, but only about 200,000 rupees (\$1,500), is given to the family.’

Anonymous official

contacting home and pleading to be brought back. The AP spoke to police and court officials and more than a dozen brides — some of whom made it back to Pakistan, others who remained trapped in China — as well as remorseful parents, neighbors, relatives and human rights workers.

Christians are targeted because they are one of the poorest communities in Muslim-majority Pakistan. The trafficking rings are made up of Chinese and Pakistani middlemen and include Christian ministers, mostly from small evangelical churches, who get bribes to urge their flock to sell their daughters.

Investigators put together the list of 629 women from Pakistan's integrated border management system, which digitally records travel documents at the country's airports. The information includes the brides' national identity numbers, their Chinese husbands' names and the dates of their marriages.

All but a handful of the marriages took place in 2018 and up to April 2019. One of the senior officials said it was believed all 629 were sold to grooms by their families.

It is not known how many more women and girls were trafficked since the list was put together. But the official said, "the lucrative trade continues." He spoke to the AP in an interview conducted hundreds of kilometers from his place of work to protect his identity. "The Chinese and Pakistani brokers make between 4 million and 10 million rupees (\$25,000 and \$65,000) from the groom, but only about 200,000 rupees (\$1,500), is given to the family," he said.

The official, with years of experience studying human trafficking in Pakistan, said many of the women who spoke to investigators told of forced fertility treatments, physical and sexual abuse and, in some cases, forced prostitution. Although no evidence has emerged, at least one investigation report contains allegations of organs being harvested from some of the women sent to China.

In September, Pakistan's investigation agency sent a report it labeled "fake Chinese marriages cases" to Prime Minister Imran Khan. The report, a copy of which was attained by the AP, provided details of cases registered against 52 Chinese nationals and 20 of their Pakistani associates in two

cities in eastern Punjab province — Faisalabad, Lahore — as well as in the capital Islamabad. The Chinese suspects included the 31 later acquitted in court.

Activists and human rights workers say Pakistan has sought to keep the trafficking of brides quiet so as not to jeopardize Pakistan's increasingly close economic relationship with China.

A report released this month by Human Rights Watch, documenting trafficking in brides from Myanmar to China, said the practice is spreading. It said Pakistan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, North Korea and Vietnam have "all



K.M. CHAUDHARY/AP

Sumaira, a Pakistani woman, shows a picture of her Chinese husband in Gujranwala, Pakistan, in May. Sumaira, who didn't want her full name used, said she was raped repeatedly by Chinese men at a house in Islamabad where she was taken after her brothers arranged her marriage to the older Chinese man.

have become source countries for a brutal business."

"One of the things that is very striking about this issue is how fast the list is growing of countries that are known to be source countries in the bride trafficking business," Heather Barr, the HRW report's author, told AP.

Omar Warriach, Amnesty International's campaigns direc-

tor for South Asia, said Pakistan "must not let its close relationship with China become a reason to turn a blind eye to human rights abuses against its own citizens."

"It is horrifying that women are being treated this way without any concern being shown by the authorities in either country. And it's shocking that it's happening on this scale," he said.

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WORLD

Europeans rap Iran for nuclear-capable missile progression

By EDITH M. LEDERER
Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — France, Germany and the United Kingdom say "Iran's developments of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles" go against a U.N. Security Council resolution calling on Tehran not to undertake any activity related to such missiles.

Ambassadors from the three European nations urged U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in a letter circulated Wednesday to inform the council in his next report that Iran's ballistic missile activity is "inconsistent" with the call in a council resolution endorsing the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran.

The letter cites footage released on social media April 22, of a previously unseen flight test of a new Shahab-3 medium-range ballistic missile variant "equipped with a maneuverable re-entry vehicle." It says: "The Shahab-3 booster used in the test is a Missile Technology Control Regime category-1 system and as such is technically capable of delivering a nuclear weapon."

The Europeans noted that a 2015 report by the International Atomic Energy Agency on possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program concluded "that extensive evidence indicated detailed Iranian research in 2002-2003 on arming the Shahab-3 with a nuclear warhead."

Officials in the Trump administration also have said Iran is working to obtain nuclear-capable missiles, something the Iranians deny.

President Donald Trump withdrew from the nuclear agreement in May 2018. But it is still supported by the five other parties — France, Britain, Russia and China, which are all veto-wielding Security Council members, and Germany, which is currently serving a two-year term on the council.

The letter says "France, Germany and the United Kingdom assert once again our firm conclusion that Iran's development of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles and related technologies is inconsistent" with the missile provision in the council resolution.

That provision urges Iran "not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons." But it does not require Tehran to halt such activity, and the Iranian government insists all its missile activities are legal and not nuclear-related.

The Europeans' letter says they used the Missile Technology Control Regime "performance characteristics" that a rocket system would need to be capable of delivering at least a 500-kilogram payload to a range of at least 185 miles to be nuclear-capable.

The Security Council has scheduled a Dec. 19 meeting to discuss implementation of the 2015 resolution on the Iran nuclear deal.

During last year's meeting, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo urged the council to again ban Iranian ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons and to maintain an arms embargo that is scheduled to be lifted in 2020 under the nuclear deal.

At least 58 migrants die in capsizing near Mauritania

Associated Press

NOUAKHOTT, Mauritania — Scores of migrants who swam through rough Atlantic Ocean waters to safety from a capsized boat were receiving care Thursday in Mauritania after 58 others drowned in one of the deadliest disasters this year among people making the perilous journey to Europe.

The boat that left Gambia a week ago had been carrying at least 150 people, including women and children. It was headed toward Spain's Canary Islands but tried to approach the Mauritanian coast to get fuel and food, Laura Lungarotti, chief of mission in the West African nation with the U.N. migration agency, told The Associated Press.

"Many drowned. The ones who survived swam up to the Mauri-

tanian coast close to the city of Nouadhibou," she said.

Local authorities searched for an unknown number of missing people.

At least 83 people swam to shore, including two women and at least 10 minors, the U.N. agency said. Mauritanian authorities said they found at least 85 survivors, 10 of whom were taken to the hospital for "urgent" treatment.

The survivors were receiving care in accordance with "human solidarity, fraternity and African hospitality," Interior Minister Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug said in a statement that estimated the boat held as many as 180 people, most of them aged 20 to 30.

Mauritania will open an investigation into those responsible for "this drama" including possible trafficking networks, the statement said.

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WORLD

France shuts down amid mass strikes

BY ANGELA CHARLTON
AND SYLVIE CORBET
Associated Press

PARIS — The Eiffel Tower shut down, France's high-speed trains stood still and tens of thousands of people marched through Paris and other cities Thursday in a massive and sometimes chaotic outpouring of anger at the government's plan to overhaul the retirement system.

Small groups of masked activists smashed store windows, set fires and hurled flares on the sidelines of the otherwise peaceful Paris march, prompting volleys of tear gas from police in body armor.

Unions launched the open-ended, nationwide strikes Thursday over President Emmanuel Macron's centerpiece reform in the biggest challenge to the centrist leader since the yellow vest movement against economic inequality erupted a year ago.

Opponents fear the changes to how and when workers can retire will threaten the hard-fought French way of life. Macron himself remained "calm and determined" to push it through, according to a top presidential official.

The Louvre Museum warned of strike disruptions, and subway stations across Paris shut their gates. Many visitors — including the U.S. energy secretary — canceled plans to travel to one of the world's biggest tourist destinations.



A man stands on a traffic light during a demonstration Thursday in Paris. Several thousand protesters took to the streets and unions launched open-ended, nationwide strikes over the French government's plan to overhaul the retirement system.

Tourists discovered historic train stations standing empty, with about nine out of 10 of high-speed TGV trains canceled. Signs at Paris' Orly Airport showed "canceled" notices, with authorities saying 20% of flights were grounded.

Some travelers showed support for the striking workers. Others complained about being em-

broiled in someone else's fight.

"I had no idea about the strike happening, and I was waiting for two hours in the airport for the train to arrive and it didn't arrive," said vacationer Ian Crossen from New York. "I feel a little bit frustrated. And I've spent a lot of money. I've spent money I didn't need to, apparently."

Paris authorities barricaded the

presidential palace and deployed 6,000 police officers as activists gathered around the Gare de l'Est train station for the march.

Police ordered all businesses, cafes and restaurants in the area to close. Authorities banned protests in the more sensitive neighborhoods around the Champs-Élysées avenue, the presidential palace, Parliament

and Notre Dame Cathedral.

Police carried out security checks of more than 9,000 people arriving for the demonstration and detained 71 even before it started. Embassies warned tourists to avoid the protest area.

The mood was impassioned in the crowd as it moved toward the Republique Plaza, with protesters waving red flares in the gray sky at the head of the crowd.

Health workers showed up to decry conditions in hospitals. Students pointed to recent student suicides and demanded government action. Environmentalists emphasized that climate justice and social justice are one and the same.

And young and old roundly condemned the new retirement plan, which they fear would take money out of their pockets and reduce the period of relaxation the French expect in the last decades of their lives.

Skirmishes broke out between police firing tear gas and protesters throwing flares at a protest in the western French city of Nantes, and thousands of red-vested union activists marched through cities from Marseille on the Mediterranean to Lille in the north.

The big question is how long the strike will last. Transport Minister Elisabeth Borne said she expects the travel troubles to be just as bad on Friday, and unions said they will maintain the Paris subway system strike at least through Monday.

Officials found proof of Russian mercenaries fighting in Libyan war

Associated Press

TRIPOLI, Libya — Officials in Libya's U.N.-supported government say they plan to confront Moscow over the alleged deployment of Russian mercenaries fighting alongside their opponents in the country's civil war.

Libyan and U.S. officials accuse Russia of deploying fighters through a private security contractor, the Wagner Group, to key battleground areas in Libya in the past months.

They say the Russian fighters are backing commander Khalifa Hifter, whose forces have been trying for months to capture the capital Tripoli. The U.N.-supported Government of National Accord is based in Tripoli.

The GNA has documented between 600 to 800 Russian fighters in Libya and is collecting their names in a list to present to the Russian government, according to Khalid al-Meshri, the head of the Tripoli-based government's Supreme Council of State.

"We are going to visit Russia after we collect all evidence and present to the authorities and see

what they say," al-Meshri told The Associated Press last week. He did not say when that visit would take place.

Moscow has repeatedly denied playing any role in Libya's fighting.

Hifter's self-styled Libyan National Army — made up of army units, ultraconservative Salafists, and tribesmen — launched its offensive on Tripoli in April after seizing much of eastern Libya from Islamic militants and other rivals in recent years. Hifter is backed by the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, as well as France and Russia, while the Tripoli-based government receives aid from Turkey, Qatar and Italy.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs David Schenker told reporters last week that the State Department is working with European partners to impose sanctions on the Russian military contractor responsible for sending fighters to Tripoli.

"The way that this organization of Russians, in particular, has operated before raises the specter



A wounded fighter of a unit allied with the U.N.-supported Libyan government is moved in Tripoli, Libya, in September. Libyan officials plan to present evidence to Moscow of Russian mercenaries fighting alongside their adversary in the civil war.

of large-scale casualties in civilian populations," he said.

Schenker's comments came shortly after U.S. officials met with Hifter to press for a ceasefire and "expressed serious concern" over Russia's intervention in the conflict.

But President Donald Trump has sent decidedly mixed messages to Hifter.

Trump voiced support of Hifter when he launched his attempt to take over Tripoli, praising the commander's "anti-terrorism" efforts in a phone conversation. The call was a sharp break with

the U.S. policy of supporting Libya's Tripoli-based Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj.

Hifter's offensive dealt a blow to U.N. efforts to bring warring parties together. Al-Meshri called for confidence-building measures and a push toward presidential and parliamentary elections.

"Since [Moammar] Gadhafi's ouster, there have been no presidential elections. People are fed up," he said.

The Russians' presence has further mired an already complex conflict.

4 leave Brexit Party to back Britain PM's Conservatives

Associated Press

LONDON — Four elected officials from Britain's Brexit Party are quitting and backing Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservatives.

The quartet accuses party leader Nigel Farage of putting Britain's exit from the European Union at risk.

The four, who are among 29 Brexit Party members elected to the European Parliament, oppose Farage's decision to field hundreds of candidates in the U.K.'s Dec. 12 election.

The party is not running in 317 seats where the Conservatives are strong, to avoid splitting the pro-Brexit vote, but is fielding candidates in about 300 other constituencies.

One of the four, Amunziata Rees-Mogg, said "the Conservatives are the only option for Brexit supporters and democrats alike."

Farage's party accused the quartet of being in cahoots with the Conservatives and noted that Rees-Mogg's brother serves in Johnson's government.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Workers fired after throwing packages

AK ANCHORAGE — An Anchorage company fired and disciplined workers after a video showed them throwing Amazon.com delivery packages to each other in a warehouse.

The video of workers at the Legacy Logistics LLC warehouse near Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport was posted to social media last Thursday and shared more than 4,000 times.

The company said an employee posted the video, which resulted in dozens of outraged comments.

The video showed employees throwing packages and some of the parcels landing on the concrete floor.

Gun found inside gift bought at thrift store

FL CRESTVIEW — A woman who bought a baby shower gift at a Florida Goodwill store was shocked when the father-to-be opened the box and found a loaded semi-automatic rifle instead of a baby bouncer.

Veronica Alvarez-Rodriguez told the Northwest Florida Daily News that she and her husband stopped by the store in Valparaiso as they were heading to a friend's baby shower. She found a Baby Einstein's bouncer that was unopened and appeared to be new.

While some of the guests laughed, Alvarez-Rodriguez said she and her husband were shocked. They called the Crestview Police Department.

The incident remains under investigation. There were no details on how the gun got into the box.

Fired waiter accused of adding tips to bills

NC FUQUAY-VARINA — A former North Carolina restaurant worker has been accused of adding tips to customers' bills.

Dalton Michael Chobanian, 26, turned himself in to authorities, Fuquay-Varina police said. He is accused of adding money to as many as 60 transactions at Abbey Road Tavern while he worked there as a waiter, news outlets reported.

Lt. Brett Walsh said a customer told police that an extra \$10 had been added to his bill at Abbey Road Tavern in September, WRAL-TV reported. That sparked a police review of the restaurant's receipts. Walsh said Chobanian would add \$5 or \$10 to patrons' final bill, taking a total of \$550 from customers.

Eel powers aquarium's Christmas lights

TN CHATTANOOGA — Visitors to the Tennessee Aquarium are likely to learn that an electric eel named Miguel Watson is lighting up a Christmas tree.

A special system connected to Miguel's tank enables his shocks to power strands of lights on a nearby tree, according to a news release.

Miguel releases low-voltage



PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE/AP

Breakfast with veterans

Ted Turek, 78, left, of Whitehall, Pa., listens to Maddox Knowles, who is in the fifth grade, along with Tom Holzer, 73, also of Whitehall, Pa., at the Veterans Breakfast at Paynter Elementary School on Tuesday in the Baldwin borough of Pittsburgh. Turek was an Army aircraft mechanic in Vietnam in 1964 and 1965 while Holzer was U.S. Army crewman. Students wrote speeches, thank you papers and decorated the library while veterans shared their stories.

blips of electricity when he is trying to find food, aquarist Kimberly Hurt said. That translates to a rapid, dim blinking of the Christmas lights. When he is eating or excited he emits higher voltage shocks which cause bigger flashes.

The aquarium hopes the Christmas tree will spark appreciation for the unusual freshwater fish.

Police: French bulldogs stolen from 2 homes

FL WEST PALM BEACH — Investigators are searching for two French bulldogs who they believe were stolen from Florida homes during burglaries.

According to the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, a tan bulldog named Arthur was inside a kennel in the home when a burglar broke in on Monday. The bulldog hasn't been seen since.

The Palm Beach Post reported that on the same day, another bulldog was reportedly stolen from another home. Natalia has black fur and brown eyes.

Family asked to change how it gifts coats

VA NORFOLK — A Virginia woman and her family have gifted coats to homeless people by leaving the winter weather gear hung about the city for years but may soon have to change tactics.

THE CENSUS

101

The number of pairs of nesting loons in Vermont in 2019, the most since the state began tracking loons in 1978. Seventy-five of the pairs produced 115 chicks, said Eric Hanson of the Vermont Center for Ecotudies, which has been working with the state on loon recovery. Of those percent, he said. Biologists say one of the main threats still facing loons as they continue to recover is human disturbance during the breeding season.

Brenda Parker said she was told this year that the tradition is considered littering. The Virginian-Pilot reported Norfolk instead wants Parker to work with an outreach program. City spokeswoman Lori Crouch says that would ensure the coats are delivered in better condition than if left outside.

Man's cat found after 2 months at rest area

OR PENDLETON — A man has been reunited with his cat more than two months after she slipped out of his car at an eastern Oregon rest area.

Antonio Martinez stopped at the Deadman Pass rest area 18 miles east of Pendleton during his move from Texas to Beaverton, the East Oregonian reported.

He said that's when his 4-year-old tabby cat Korra slipped out. He and his father searched the rest area but finally had to leave.

Last week, a motorist headed home to Aberdeen, Wash., stopped at the rest area and spotted Korra. Robert Holt says he used an old

ham sandwich to lure the feline into his car with his wife and four children.

Holt's wife reached an animal rescue person who took Korra home overnight and then to the Pendleton shelter.

School cancels 'Tarzan' over racism fears

NY ELMSFORD — A suburban New York high school is canceling a production of Disney's "Tarzan" after two parents complained about the source material's implicit racism and imperialism.

The Journal-News reported that the drama club at Alexander Hamilton High School in Elmsford will instead hold auditions for a musical adaptation of Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night."

School district superintendent Marc Balocco said the parents who came forward were concerned about students of color playing simian characters on stage.

Couple, married 68 years, dies 1 day apart

MN ST. PETER — Bob and Corrine Johnson got married as teens in southern Minnesota's farm country and lived together for 68 years.

They were laid to rest after dying 33 hours apart, KARE-TV reported.

They lived in their farm home near St. Peter until six months ago. After Bob was hospitalized with cancer, Corrine joined him there with congestive heart failure.

He was 88. She was 87.

Pothole protested with holiday decor

MS MCCOMB — Residents of a Mississippi city protested a large pothole in their neighborhood by decorating it with holiday cheer.

The Enterprise-Journal reported residents of McComb's Edgewood neighborhood topped the pothole and its yellow traffic cone with tinsel, spray-painted pinecones, white leaves and other decorations. The newspaper said residents plan to add lights and presents in the hopes of drawing the city's attention.

It's unclear how long the pothole has gone unattended by the city or what drove residents to start protesting it recently.

From wire reports

WEEKEND



Gifts for
gamers
Pages 36-37



Releases of note

The Associated Press rounds up
new albums to help get you
into the holiday mood

Pages 24-25

WEEKEND: MOVIES



GIRL TALK

Actresses unite to discuss their working lives, their films, and the future as it looks to them

By AMY KAUFMAN AND MARK OLSEN
Los Angeles Times

Sometimes even celebrities need advice. Even on how to be a celebrity. So it was recently that Charlize Theron, Renee Zellweger, Cynthia Erivo and Nora Lum — perhaps better known as Awkwafina — recently came to hang on every word as Jennifer Lopez talked about her attitude toward her own fame and celebrity.

"I just try to stay super conscious of the fact that I have a responsibility," Lopez said. "And it's not that I don't have bad days. I'm a human being."

Zellweger in particular was equally candid about grappling with the demands of being a public person.

"I find that when I focus most of my energy on the people who are closest to me and I spend time nurturing my internal self, my curiosity, learning, growing, becoming a better person, that I do a better job of it when I keep it small," Zellweger said. "I'm a better daughter. I'm a better friend. I'm a better actress. I think I'm a better human being."

"Because I've gotten caught up trying to run a race that doesn't belong to me," Zellweger added. "I've seen what that looks like, and it doesn't suit me."

There was an air of genuine curiosity and exchange as the five women gathered together for a roundtable conversation. The celebrated roles that brought them together — Lopez as a stripper-turned-criminal in "Hustlers," Theron as newscaster Megyn Kelly in "Bombshell," Zellweger as entertainer Judy Garland in "Judy," Erivo as slave-turned-abolitionist Harriet Tubman in "Harriet" and Lum as a young woman grappling with family and cross-cultural identity in "The Farewell" — were just conversation starters as the talk veered toward telling stories without judgment, overcoming great odds and the rigors of pole dancing.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

Los Angeles Times: Jennifer, your pole dancing in "Hustlers" is astonishing. Was it just difficult athletically?

Lopez: I mean, it was a lot of things. It was very challenging; physically it was very acrobatic. And that was new for me. And I think people think, "Oh, she's a dancer, so that'll be an easy thing to do." It wasn't; it was really difficult. And definitely what I love about doing movies is that you get to do these things that you would not normally do; you learn all these different skills. In the beginning, I was like, "Oh yeah, I'm going to learn how to pole dance and it's going to be so sexy and it's going to be

amazing." And then I was like, "This [stuff] is hard and I'm in pain. It's not fun."

Renee, you studied Judy Garland intensely in preparing for "Judy." Was some of that just learning how she looked, how she moved, or what did you hope to get from that?

Zellweger: Well, a better understanding about the circumstances of her life that she was grappling with and her final chapter. It didn't make sense to me. I didn't know a lot about what she was experiencing at that time in her life. And I felt like a lot that was written about her sort of blanketed that final chapter in tragedy in some way. And I just wanted to understand it better and more deeply. We dug in. I say "we," because it was this shared collaboration with everybody for like a year before we started to conjure her essence.

And to advocate for her in some way, because when you come to understand how she ends up, having financial hardships and some of the health issues that she was struggling with, you empathize with her but it also shifts the perspective. I don't think that she was tragic or a victim, but she was really heroic that she could carry on and continue to perform at this high level for as long as she did. She's for the ages.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

From an abolitionist to a veteran stripper, actresses (from left) Cynthia Erivo, Nora Lum (Awkwafina), Jennifer Lopez, Charlize Theron and Renee Zellweger all star in films out this year.

JAY L. CLENNIN/Los Angeles Times

WEEKEND: MOVIES

FROM PAGE 22

Nora, in "The Farewell" your character Billi is derived from director Lulu Wang's real-life story. So having her right there as you're sort of channeling her, what was that like?

Lum: I knew that the character was based on Lulu, but the cool thing is she wasn't very stuck on, "This is me." She wanted to share the character. When you have that level of trust, it's good because we built it together. And at the end of the day, Billi really symbolizes the specific experience rather than (being) based on one specific person.

Charlize, you've said that this transformation of playing Megyn Kelly was more difficult than becoming Aileen Wuornos for "Monster." Can you talk more about that?

Theron: God, context, I've got to watch myself. I said that in just because there was a funny moment where somebody had brought that up at a Q&A and I was trying to be funny and now I've got to fix this story.

Listen, you can't say something like that because even experience and every person or character that you play is just so different and to even say that one's harder than the other is just completely stupid. And I'm gonna start censoring myself. But I will say this. It was harder in the sense that Megyn is incredibly well known and Aileen really wasn't. And I feel like Aileen was a discovery for people, like they would see that movie and then they would Google search her, see the Nick Broomfield documentaries. And so it was like a later discovery, which allows you a little bit of breathing room as an actor because your audience is gonna go in not necessarily knowing so much.

With Megyn, I knew I had none of that because she's just so known and her voice is so specific. And we all know that persona, how she carries herself. That was harder in the sense that I felt that pressure of like, "Oh, I don't feel like there's any wiggle room here."

Cynthia, in many schools here in America, we only learn the bare essence of Harriet Tubman's life, if even that much. As a British person, what did you know of her before the project came to you?

Erivo: I was lucky that in my school we actually learned about her. So I knew what she did. I knew that she had taken the run for 100 miles to freedom. I knew that she had come back again and again and again. I just didn't know the details of her. And I think this experience was so cool because we were able to fill in the blanks. I was thinking of it like painting by numbers. You see the picture but there are no col-



STX Films

Jennifer Lopez, second from left, acted in and produced "Hustlers," also starring (from left) Lili Reinhart, Keke Palmer and Constance Wu as strippers running an illegal scam.

ors. But then we could fill in all the colors, giving people the detail of just small things to make her real. This gave her humanity, her womanhood back, because that's what she was, first and foremost, a human and a woman.

Jennifer, you're a producer on "Hustlers," and Charlize, you're a producer on "Bombshell." Is there something about a specific project that makes you want to take that extra step and be more in control of the project?

Theron: I have produced most of the stuff that I've done probably in the last decade. I have to love it because it's a year, if not more, of your life where you're needed and you have to see it through all the way. And it's very time-consuming, so I try to do things that I know are subject matters that I want to stay engaged with for however long it's going to take to make. And that I know I'm going to be continuously interested in and excited by and want to sit in an editing room day after day and figure it out and fight for it. I mean, we finished "Bombshell" and last week we were still trying to figure stuff out. When you are producing something and you love it and you want to see it all the way through, it never stops.

I'm wondering if in the last couple of years you all have noticed concrete changes on sets, like there's been discussion about intimacy coordinators and sort of a different vibe, having more women around. Have you seen practical changes in that way?

Zellweger: It's just that people are conscientious about it in a way that they hadn't been before. Considering things, that someone uses the word "consideration," that there's consideration. Just things that people took for granted, that

this is fine. You know, no one ever thought to question, "Oh wait, no, it's really kind of not."

Lopez: For "Hustlers," it was an amazing thing to see all women on a set. All the producers, mostly women, and the ones that were on the set every day were women. The director was a woman. The writer was a woman. All the cast were women, the editor ... there were just women everywhere. And what you realize is like, "Wow, I've never been on a set where it was like that." And I've done I don't know how many movies in the past how many years.

Erivo: "Harriet," this particular script, has taken 20 years. It was written 20 years ago now. And then Debra Martin Chase, the producer, got her hands on it about 10 years ago and it's taken that long to get here because people just didn't want to make movies where there was a woman of color at the center and in a period movie. It just wasn't being made. And so it just was one of the most refreshing things to be doing that and still have emotional agency. And with my director, Kasi Lemmons, another woman of color, that's never happened in my life. I think I've been directed by one woman in theater as well. So it's one of those amazing things to be a part of, to see yourself on the other side of the camera as well.

Nora, as someone who is still relatively fresh in your career, do you find this moment, does it feel like you're full of possibility? Is it exciting for you to know that there's all these opportunities working with female filmmakers, having new distribution platforms? That must make this a really exciting moment to be emerging as a performer.

Lum: It does. And I've always been very

outspoken. I'm very optimistic about the direction that we're going. But that's also not to say that you don't have to acknowledge where it's changing from. To hear that a lot of actresses haven't worked with a lot of women. I've worked with equal parts men and women. I've worked with female DP's. I've worked with female writers, all female writers rooms. So yes, it does seem like there is a lot of possibility, not just for me but for everyone. It seems like people want to hear our stories and different kinds of stories are being put on. But we have to realize what we're changing from what other people had to go through before us.

So, Jennifer, you are very good at being a celebrity. It seems like something you are naturally good at and comfortable with. Is that something you've learned?

Theron: Tell us. Help us.

Lopez: I feel like there is a responsibility when you're a public person. You can't get around it. I know we all want to be liked. "Just want to be nice and I just want to do this and I just want to do that. And I don't care what people say or think. But we have to, because we care what people say. And so it's just about being your best self. And I think that's where I keep my mind. It's like you think I'm a good celebrity because what I'm trying to do is put my best foot forward all the time and still be myself, still be authentic to who I am.

Theron: You've never lost that. And I want that. So when you're tired, and it's inappropriate. What do you do? What do you tell yourself? Because I think I'm just a jerk).

Lopez: I know exactly what you mean, because I'm like that too. And I just try to stay super conscious of the fact that I have a responsibility and that maybe that person is never gonna meet me again. And it's not that I don't have bad days. I'm a human being. So I get tired. And people are constantly judging you.

I had terrible things happen in the beginning of my career that I had to come back from. I did magazine articles where I said the wrong thing. It was a trial-and-error thing. And then you get put in a category of like you're this person or that person and you're a diva. But at the same time, I had to look and go, what am I doing? Because at the end of the day, it's always, do you like what you're doing? And for me, it's always about how can I get better? That's why I do so much. How can I be better? I'm going to be a better mom, sister, daughter, friend, business partner, a better actress, better singer, better dancer, better producer. It's always about, how can we do it better next time? Because you make mistakes.

NOW PLAYING "Playmobil: The Movie"

In "Playmobil: The Movie," a top-secret organization has caused citizens from different lands to vanish into thin air. Charismatic secret agent Rex Dasher (Daniel Radcliffe) must partner with smooth-talking food truck driver Del (Jim Gaffigan) and Marla (Anya Taylor-Joy), a smart, savvy civilian with her own secret agenda, to rescue them. A review of the animated action-adventure film was not available at press time. The movie is rated PG for action/peril and some language. Running time: 110 minutes.

STX Entertainment



WEEKEND: MUSIC

Holiday Mood Music

Ne-Yo

Another Kind of Christmas
(Motown/Compound Entertainment)

When it comes to holiday albums, Ne-Yo's got two great things going for himself: a beautiful voice, plus a merry and bright charisma that makes him a shoo-in for anybody's holiday

TV special. For that reason, the singer's latest release, "Another Kind of Christmas,"

comes as no surprise, though it is a bit of a shocker that this is Ne-Yo's first Christmas album.

The set includes a handful of yuletide classics, which Ne-Yo manages to modernize

without messing up. He combines beautiful harmonies with a bit of beatboxing on "The Christmas Song"; plays his own backup on a slightly slowed down and swagged up version of Donny Hathaway's "This Christmas"; and he is moving on his cover of Marvin Gaye's "I Want to Come Home for Christmas" — a song delivered from the perspective of a prisoner of war.

Ne-Yo also introduces his own original holiday tunes, including the fun reggae-influenced "Christmas Vibez" featuring Satori and Dre Island. Naughty jam "Open Mine Tonight" about a little Christmas night nooky — is another standout. And then there's "Talk About It," where Ne-Yo paints a spirited picture of holidays at home, complete with aunts in the kitchen, mama's spiked eggnog and squabbles that get squashed just in time for dinner.

"Another Kind of Christmas" packs a couple of holiday gems, and it's just the kind of Christmas gift Ne-Yo fans deserve.

— Melanie J. Sims

Chicago

Chicago Christmas 2019 (Rhino)

If you're curling up near the fireplace and the Christmas tree with a loved one, there may be no better holiday album to listen to this Christmas than "Chicago Christmas 2019."

But if you're driving in your car listening to it, there may not be a more dangerous one: it could easily put you to sleep, making you drive off the road and crash. In their latest stab at Christmas music, the '70s supergroup whose iconic horn section helped define the sound of a generation of pop music

plays it slow and gentle here, one track after another of what used to be called "easy listening" music that should prove unavoidable in dentist office waiting rooms throughout the world.

In an earlier Christmas album, Chicago penned an enduring holiday standard in "Jolly Old St. Nicholas," which most fans know by its chorus of "What's It Gonna Be, Santa?" That

track was rocking, up-tempo, tongue-in-cheek fun.

Sadly, there's nothing like that here. A salsa version of "Here We Come A Caroling" finally shows a pulse, but all in all, this album is strictly couples' therapy.

— Wayne Parry

Los Lobos

Llego Navidad (Rhino)

Chicano rock pioneers Los Lobos waited 47 years to record their first Christmas album and, perhaps not surprisingly, the work takes the veteran group back to its beginnings, the years when members grew up fusing rock 'n' roll with sounds they heard echoing from backyard gatherings in largely Latino East Los Angeles.

The result is "Llego Navidad" — Spanish for "Christmas is Here" — a collection of traditional mariachi, salsa and son jarocho songs infused with a dose of rock 'n' roll to create a holiday recording pretty much like no other.

Lea Michele

Christmas in New York
(Sony Masterworks)

It might be hard to believe, but Lea Michele has never put out a Christmas album.

That changes this year with the 11-track "Christmas in the City," which is exactly what you'd expect when the former "Glee" star tackles holiday classics — graceful, tasteful and lushly produced (by "Glee" songwriters/producers Adam Anders and Peer Astrom.) Alongside "Silver Bells" and "Silent Night," Michele even offers a new one she co-wrote, "Christmas in New York," where she sings that "from Harlem to the Battery/Every corner's bustling."

Michele doesn't mess with the classics, she just perfects them, blessed with a crystal-clear voice and slathering them with a childlike, sugary joy. Darren Criss stops by for a lovely "White Christmas" and Jonathan Groff for a twangy "I'll Be Home for Christmas."

One rare stumble is her cover of "Do You Want to Build a Snowman" from "Frozen" that seems to lounge-y. But stick around for her sublime "O Holy Night," "Silent Night" and a knockout duet with Cynthia Erivo on "Angels We Have Heard on High." Michele has delivered a modern treasure.

— Mark Kennedy

The musicians manage to hit all the traditional themes — from the birth of Jesus to decorating the tree in "La Rame" to the sadness of being alone during the holidays in "Amarga Navidad."

All the while, they move effortlessly from traditional Mexican instruments to electric guitars as their vocals vary from Spanish to English.

They also throw in a few more recognizable tunes like the Tex-Mex rocker "It's Christmas Time in Texas," the comical '50s novelty hit "¿Donde Esta Santa Claus?" and the Jose Feliciano standard "Feliz Navidad."

Their best, however, is the album's only original, "Christmas and You," from Lobos song-artists Louie Perez and David Hidalgo.

For heartbreak, it puts Elvis Presley's "Blue Christmas" to shame.

— John Rogers

The McCrary Sisters

A Very McCrary Christmas (Rounder)

Joy is just a three-letter word, as gospel legend Shirley Caesar notes in a spirited riff on "Joyful, Joyful" from the McCrary Sisters' new holiday album. But if you were looking to wrap the season into one joyful package, "A Very McCrary Christmas" would do it.

The sisters, renowned Nashville background singers, range around in styles under the gospel canopy, from a spirited, bass-driven "Joy to the World" to a movingly somber take on "What Child Is This?" featuring Americana mainstay Buddy Miller.

The album pulsates with classic and modern gospel arrangements that wouldn't be out of place in a Sunday morning church service at the height of the holiday season — if the house band featured big-time talent from across the music spectrum.

Alison Krauss lends stellar vocals to a majestic take on "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." Bluesman Keb' Mo' shares lead vocals with Regina McCrary on a soulful version of "Away in a Manger" that also features elegant playing by lap steel virtuoso Jerry Douglas.

The reason the sisters did the album, according to Deborah McCrary, was to "put the reason back in the season."

Consider it done, joyfully.

— Scott Stroud



iStock

WEEKEND: MUSIC

Keb' Mo'

Moonlight, Mistletoe & You
(Concord Records)

Now that he's all grown up, Keb' Mo' is fed up with Christmas. He has great holiday memories about family gatherings, caroling, sledding, Santa Claus and gifts.

But the stressed-out adult in him is weighed down by maxed-out credit cards, and all he wants is to move further along the calendar.

Thankfully, it's just a charade, and Mo' even makes "Christmas Is Annoying" the shortest by far of the 10 songs on the first Christmas album of his career.

The rest of the tunes may be more serious, but only just, as Mo' keeps sentiments on the light side as he blends a variety of blues styles with pop, R&B and jazz with the guest vocals of Melissa Manchester and some oh-so-cute backing from singing children.

There are also quality guests among his songwriting partners, like Beth Nielsen Chapman and Mac Davis, while covers include tunes by Koko Taylor, Teddy Edwards and Irving Berlin.

Mo' sounds at home in all genres, but he excels here on the blues tracks, including "Santa Claus Blues," "Merry, Merry Christmas" and "Santa Claus, Santa Claus."

— Pablo Gorondi

Bryan Adams

Christmas (Polydor/UMe)

It's not easy to write an original Christmas song that will be remembered from year to year. Bryan Adams has already done it twice, penning two recurring Christmas staples with "Christmas Time" and "Reggae Christmas."

With "Joe and Mary," one of two new tracks on this 5-song EP, Adams may have done it again. The song, set to classic Chuck Berry chords and riffage, updates the nativity scene to the modern day. The young couple travel "in a beat-up Buick" to a Motel 6, hoping there will be room for Mary to have her baby. You know the rest.

The other new track is his version of the children's Christmas song "Must Be Santa," which has been a staple of countless kindergarten holiday recitals. This version comes complete with child backup singers and should be good for a few smiles.

Together with his '80s Christmas anthems, also included here, Adams cuts like a knife through the morass of mediocre holiday music out there.

— Wayne Parry

Warren Haynes

Warren Haynes Presents The Benefit Concert Vol. 16 (Evil Teen Records)

Since the late 1980s, Warren Haynes has made a tradition of his Christmas Jam, an annual event in Asheville, N.C., benefiting the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity.

Haynes has also made a tradition of releasing albums from the concerts, usually years after they were recorded.

Volume 16 of the series continues in that vein, presenting the 2014 show in more formats — from CD and DVD to vinyl and Blu-ray and beyond — than you'll find Christmas jellies being



colors. The album includes 10 songs, the film, 16.

A who's who of jam bands and Southern rockers — from Haynes' own Gov't Mule and Bill Kreutzmann's Billy & the Kids to Jason Isbell, Hard Working Americans, Col. Bruce Hampton, Duane Trucks, Paul Riddle and many others — perform spirited renditions of songs from the Marshall Tucker Band ("Can't You See," "Southern Woman"), Neil Young ("Cinnamon Girl," "Tonight's the Night"), the Grateful Dead ("Shakedown Street"), The Band ("The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down") and more.

They may not have much, if anything, to do with traditional Christmas songs, but it's the thought that counts — and the millions of dollars raised so far for a great cause.

— Pablo Gorondi

Various artists

Hanukkah + (Verve Forecast)

Why should all the music love go to Christians over the holidays? Music supervisor Randall Poster has come to Hanukkah's rescue by spearheading a song collection inspired by the Jewish holiday.

The 12-track "Hanukkah +" is wonderfully strange, ranging from jokey and folksy to confessional, all bookended by two traditional songs performed by Jack Black, who brings his off-kilter, disruptive energy.

His take on "Oh Hanukkah" leads off the collection, which is heavy on references to latkes, dreidels and menorahs. The trio HAIM sing Leonard Cohen's "If It Be Your Will," and Adam Green of the Moldy Peaches turns his tune, "Dreidels of Fire," into a look back at heartbreak. "She turned my festival of lights into a festival of pain," Green sings.

Alex Frankel from the electronic duo Holy Ghost! sings in a computer-aided voice about a specific holiday memory in "Hanukkah in '96." The Flaming Lips offer their original "Sing It Now, Sing It Somehow."

The standout is London Wainwright III's "Eight Nights a Week," a hysterical tune from a gentile that references Irving Berlin, alternate-side parking and how Hanukkah "seems less fraud and more fun to me" than Christmas. It deserves a place in your rotation beside the classics.

— Mark Kennedy

Andrew Bird

HARK! (Loma Vista Recordings)

Whether whistling, singing or playing the violin, Andrew Bird rarely takes the straight and narrow path, whether it's salvation or damnation at play. Or great music.

"HARK!" is capitalized, as if to grab your attention, and while there are no herald angels about, Bird bookends the record with a pair of inspired originals — the peeing "Alabaster" and the rousing, encouraging "Night's Falling."

In between are a pair of fabulous instrumental covers of compositions from Vince Guaraldi's "A Charlie Brown Christmas" — the flowing, bellowy "Skating" and "Christmas is Coming," which is jazzy and partly whistled. Both have guitar solos that appear to require what so many family band performances around the Christmas tree need: more practice.

Also on hand are takes on even older classics, including "White Christmas," where Bird's voice is enveloped in the 1950s style of Buddy Holly.

Bird's whistling on some of the songs begs the speculation that had he been born a few decades earlier, it could have been him making the eerie sounds on the Beach Boys' "Good Vibrations," not the notoriously capricious theremin.

— Pablo Gorondi

Josh Rouse

The Holiday Songs of Josh Rouse
(Yep Rock Records)

Full of pure sentiments, from nostalgia and mirth to melancholy and heartbreak, Josh Rouse's holiday album is too cool for Yule.

Including nine original tunes written over several years, Rouse's decision to mostly avoid typically wintry sounds gives him the freedom to approach the holidays with his personal style.

Emphasizing acoustic, or barely electric, arrangements, the band — including returning producer and keyboardist Brad Jones, bassist James Haggerty



Ana Gasteyer

Sugar & Booze (Henry's Girl Records)

If the season is bringing you too much sweetness, turn to Ana Gasteyer. The "Saturday Night Live" album brings a tasty tang — in one song she encourages us to "pour a nip into that nog" — to her 15-track Christmas collection, "Sugar & Booze."

Gasteyer's album, which includes some songs she co-wrote as well as classic tunes, has a retro, 1950s feel, with big band horns and jazzy drum brushes. Her quirky humor is arch, often subversive toward the very holiday she's celebrating. "He's Stuck in the Chimney Again" is about an overweight Kris Kringle. "Blue Black Friday" complains about "family drama, nothing new" and she insists "Nothing Rhymes with Christmas" but finds one word at least — isthmus.

Fellow "SNL" cast member Maya Rudolph joins her on the Cuban-based, hysterically rude "Secret Santa" and Gasteyer includes her Hanukkah song "In the Market for a Miracle" from the live TV version of "A Christmas Story." When it comes to classics like "Let It Snow," Gasteyer makes them all her own, somewhat maniacally.

This is the perfect soundtrack to a holiday party filled with fun, saucy people.

— Mark Kennedy

and musician-brothers Marc and Joe Pisapia — is as nimble as Santa's helpers.

Opener "Mediterranean X-Mas" has its roots in Rouse's many years in Spain, while "Letters in the Mailbox" is a Chris Isaak-style lament.

"Lights of Town" quotes the "Baby Just Cares for Me" bass and piano and feels, along with several other songs and the cover art, like something from the first few seasons of "Mad Men."

"Easy Man" is about enjoying domestic bliss without quite slipping into docility, while "Heartbreak Holiday" is a chirpy take about getting dumped.

The songs here sound like they could have been included on any of Rouse's excellent "regular" releases. It's what makes them so enjoyable and fitting for many occasions.

— Pablo Gorondi

Rob Halford

Celestial (Legacy Recordings)

The man they call the Metal God is famous for writing songs like "Devil's Child," "A Touch of Evil," "Sin-ner" and "Saints In Hell." But if you think that's all Rob Halford thinks about, you've got another thing coming.

"Celestial," his latest foray into Christmas music, is chock full of reverential religious lyrics about God, Jesus, salvation and the nativity. It might seem a bit jarring to hear the leather-clad, Harley-riding metalhead singing "Joy to the world, the Lord has come." But he puts it over with a startling sincerity and sense of innocent fun.

It kicks off with a roar on "Donner and Blitzen," one of three original tracks on the album, and one that would be at home on the best Judas Priest albums. And let's do the "Fa-la-la-las" of "Deck the Halls" skew too lightweight, the backing track and melody are pure minor-chord mayhem.

His treatment of Christmas classics covers a wide range, with the most interesting being a complete reworking of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" with a new melody and backing chords that bear no resemblance whatsoever to the traditional arrangements. But they captivate in their originality.

And the twin guitar solos that help many a heavy metal track shred are employed to devastating effect on "Joy to the World."

— Wayne Parry



All reviews from
The Associated
Press.

WEEKEND: GADGETS



UPS/TNS

UPS has made its first commercial drone deliveries, taking CVS prescriptions to consumers' homes.

Unpacking drone promises

Air deliveries' impact on carbon emissions not so simple

By SAMANTHA MASUNAGA
Los Angeles Times

In the era of e-commerce, it takes a single click to order anything you'd like. But it takes a lot of energy to bring it to your door.

Items are shipped from factories, shuttled between warehouses and finally trucked to your home. This convenience comes at an environmental cost — transportation accounts for 29% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, with medium- and heavy-duty trucks accounting for nearly a quarter of that.

Technology enables this problem — and some will tell you the tech alone can help solve it.

Drones have been touted as a clean, fast way to appease our demand for quick deliveries. When Amazon unveiled a new design in June for its Prime Air delivery drone, it framed the initiative as part of its vision to make half its shipments net zero carbon by 2030. Wing, a division of Google parent Alphabet Inc., heralded its drones as helpful in easing greenhouse gas emissions. After UPS first publicly flew a drone from the top of a delivery truck to drop off a package at a home, an executive called the test a "big step" toward reducing UPS' emissions.

Drone delivery operations could indeed be more environmentally friendly than trucks, according to two recent studies. But that depends on how and where they are deployed.

Small drones have a lower environmental impact than ground-based delivery methods, including diesel trucks, trucks powered by natural gas or even electric vans, according to a study published last year in Nature Communications. "But drone batteries need to be charged, and that power has to come from somewhere."

For drones to live up to their green potential, plugging into clean power sources is vital. Access varies from state to state and from utility to utility.

Thanks to solar power, California frequently generates more electricity than people can use. The study in Nature Communications concluded that a one-pound package delivered by a small drone in California would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 54% compared with a diesel truck. The same delivery in Missouri, which gets most of its electricity from coal, would result in a reduction of just 23%.

"When you have low-carbon electricity and you're moving small packages, drones could have the lowest carbon footprint per package delivered," said Costa Samaras, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering at Carnegie Mellon University and a co-author of the study.

"It's much greener to have a drone flying through the air to deliver you a set of headphones than for you to get in your gasoline-powered car or even your electric car and drive to the store and get it."

The longer a drone can stay in the air and deliver packages, the more useful it is, but drones have much shorter ranges than trucks, and charging stations are far less common than gas stations. So delivery companies will need a vast network of charging stations. It's easy to put those stations

in warehouses, where the drones go anyway to load up on packages.

Building a broader network of warehouses to accommodate drones' needs would have serious environmental repercussions. More warehouses means more lighting, heating and air conditioning systems, not to mention the energy required to charge drones between flights, all of which add to the overall emissions from the service.

Rather than building new warehouses, drone delivery companies could use existing facilities — for example, drones carrying food could take off from the top of a grocery store. Amazon would be well positioned to do that, as it already has more than 500 Whole Foods stores and is experimenting with new grocery concepts.

Developing higher-capacity batteries for drones could also help. If drones could fly farther, the network of warehouses and chargers could be less dense.

Another option is deploying drones from delivery trucks when removing a few packages could streamline a driving route. The truck covers much of the distance — then takes a big load of packages one way while a drone carries some the other. Then the drone can meet up with the truck to make other such deliveries and eventually be returned to the warehouse.

"It's important to remember these modes can be used in complement," said Anne Goodchild, a co-author of the study and director of the supply chain transportation and logistics center at the University of Washington. "We shouldn't just compare drones versus trucks."

The logistics industry has inched toward some environmentally minded solutions in urban areas, such as Amazon Lockers, where a single gas-powered truck might drop off packages for dozens of customers. But that approach doesn't necessarily work in rural areas, where residents are more spread out.

That's where drones could be a more efficient way to carry packages on the "last mile" of delivery, researchers say, especially since there are fewer obstacles — such as power lines and buildings — for them to avoid.

"A drone can't really compete with a very full truck making 100 deliveries in a fairly small space," Goodchild said. "The farther apart those customers are, the less room for consolidation, the more competitive a drone can be."

But they won't be able to handle everything, at least initially. The current crop of drones envisioned for delivery service are lightweight, meaning they can only carry small, light packages over short distances.

Although drones may end up improving on the traditional ways of delivering packages, they aren't a silver bullet to vanquish the transportation industry's emissions problem. Wing's current drones can only carry packages of up to 3 pounds.

"We do not expect them to replace delivery trucks for delivery of larger items, but rather to make them more efficient," said Jonathan Bass, Wing's head of marketing and communications, in an email.

GADGET WATCH

Give the gift of sound

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

Earbuds or headphones make great gifts for yourself or a loved one during the holiday season. A search for "headphones" on Amazon gets more than 90,000 results. There's a lot to choose from, and it can get confusing. Keeping your budget in mind, here is a bunch of great choices and some specific features on each.

True wireless is the hot earbud these days. With true wireless, you get a pair of cordless headphones that work together to pick up audio from your device via Bluetooth.

Sennheiser's Momentum True Wireless Bluetooth 5.0 earbuds have the company's audiophile 7 mm dynamic drivers, which deliver exceptional hi-fi sound. Clarity, highs, lows — everything is crystal clear.

Controls for the attractive Momentum True Wireless Bluetooth 5.0 earbuds are built into the earbuds and work with a companion app. The right side controls music choices and the left is used for hands-free calls. Mic holes are in each ear and voice assistants can easily be accessed. An attractive cloth-covered USB-C storage/charging case is included for two additional charges, which can give you up to 12 hours total.

An LED light is on the side of the case so you know how much power is left. Each earbud has a fitted slot in the case, so once it's dropped in, the charging starts.

Online: en-us.sennheiser.com; \$249.95 is the holiday sale price

The Fly Sport Fit from Braven are rugged wired Bluetooth earbuds good for 12 hours of audio on a full charge. A unique charging (and storage) pouch provides 36 additional hours of playtime. If you're in a rush for sound, a BurstCharge will give you an hour of

Fly Sport Fit
Braven/TNS

House of Marley's Exodus ANC over-the-ear wireless active noise-canceling headphones are visually stunning and sound great, too. These are crafted from certified ash wood, stainless steel and recycled aluminum. But what you hear out the memory foam ear cushions, with 50 mm Hi-Definition drivers inside, is a powerful and clear sound with deep bass for a smooth and perfect balance.

Controls for volume, selections and handsfree calls are on the headset and with a quick charging USB-C connection, you can get six hours of playback on a 15-minute charge. With the active noise cancellation off, you'll get 80 hours of use; when it's on, the battery life is 28 hours.

Online: thehouseofmarley.com; \$249.99

The ZVOX AV50 noise-canceling headphones featuring AccuVoice and advanced noise-cancellation technology are a deal. With AccuVoice technology, when you're watching TV the headphones boost voices and reduce unwanted background noises. Whether you've got hearing issues or just want to turn out the world a little more effectively, this pair will deliver.

ZVOX states that they're ideal for shows with poorly recorded dialogue or extremely loud special effects. They can be used with or without the noise canceling to remove low-frequency noise. When the headphones are on, the AccuVoice is worked on. Listening to music also sounds great and was rendered in sharp clarity. The lightweight headphones fold up nicely and fit in the included hard and padded carrying case.

Online: zvox.com; regular price of \$149.99, but during the holidays, buy 1 for \$119.99 or 2 for \$199.99

playtime with just a five-minute charge.

A reflective braided cable connects the earbuds and has inline control. The sound is great and connects to two devices simultaneously. An IPX5 waterproof rating makes them splash-proof.

Online: zagg.com; \$59.99

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The ZVOX AV50 noise-canceling headphones

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe

A magical history tour

Get in the Christmas spirit in one of Germany's oldest cities

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

There are more endearing German cities to see than Worms, but few are older.

All one needs to do in Worms is wander through the city, past empty storefronts and commercial buildings, to discover a treasure trove of more than 6,000 years of history.

A witness to some of Europe's most significant cultural and political events during the Middle Ages, the city once inspired an epic poem involving a lovestruck dragon slayer and was the place where Martin Luther refused to recant his teachings.

Modern-day Worms is more industrial grit than old European charm. But its history remains a source of pride, evident in the many parks, museums and churches that remain accessible to the public and serve to preserve the stories of long ago.

A brochure in English from the tourist office maps out a walking tour that can be covered quickly in a few hours or over several days. Guided and individual city tours are also available. The map highlights 27 historical and cultural sites, starting with St. Peter's cathedral, built in the 12th century and one of three Romanesque imperial churches along the Rhine River.

Other stops include the Nibelungen Museum, where visitors can learn about the legend of Siegfried the dragon slayer and his love for the warrior maiden Brunhilde, a tale set partially in Worms that inspired a famous German epic poem. Dragon statues and symbols are prevalent around the city.

The city's annual Christmas market, which runs through Dec. 23, adds a little sparkle to the city.

The Worms Christmas market doesn't ooze with character, but it has all the staples, from mulled wine to long bratwurst. There are also hearty potato pancakes seasoned with what tasted like nutmeg and potato fries. On the sweeter side, chimney cakes and blue-candied almonds with a "Frozen" movie theme would delight most kids.

Not too far from the holiday festivities is one of the most peaceful places to wander in Worms, the centuries-old Jewish cemetery. Many of its 2,000 moss-covered gravestones look weary, as if they may tip over any day, their faded Hebrew inscriptions impossible to read. How the space survived the Nazis and World War II — by the end of which not one Jewish person remained in Worms — remains a mystery.

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PHOTOS BY JENNIFER H. SVAN/Stars and Stripes

Mulled wine is served up in traditional German garb at the Christmas market in Worms, Germany.



The Christmas market in Worms runs through Dec. 23.



Shoes cast in bronze represent where Martin Luther refused to recant his teachings in 1521 in Worms. The site is now part of Heylshof Garden.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Worms is northwest of Mannheim and less than an hour's drive from Kaiserlautern. For driving directions, put Marktplatz in your GPS, which will take you to the old town center. There are several parking garages downtown.

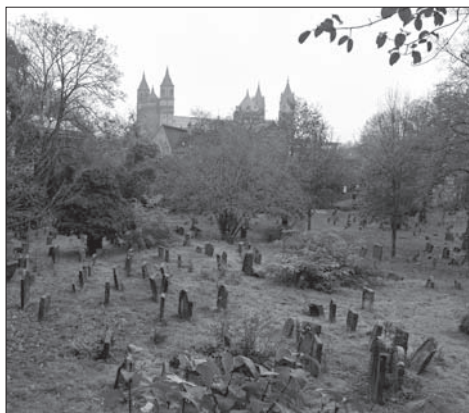
TIMES

The Christmas market in Worms runs through Dec. 23. Open daily from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. The Jewish cemetery and synagogue are open most days, as are most churches and the cathedral. Museums are closed on Mondays.

INFORMATION

Visit the tourist information center in Worms to pick up free brochures about the city and find out about guided tours. Address: Neumarkt 14 67547 Worms, Germany; phone: +49 (0) 6241-853-7306; Website: worms.de/en/tourismus/tourist-info

— Jennifer H. Svan



Left: The Jewish cemetery in Worms is filled with more than 2,000 moss-covered gravestones.



Right: Statues and symbols of dragons can be found throughout the city of Worms, an old city in southwestern Germany on the Rhine River. This statue of a boy standing over dragons stands near St. Peter's Cathedral, one of three Romanesque churches in Germany.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

How to avoid crowds in the Cinque Terre

When I first came to the Cinque Terre, then an isolated stretch of the Italian Riviera south of Genoa, it was a classic "back door": a string of five pastel-hued hamlets clinging to craggy seaside slopes and surrounded by steep, rocky vineyards. It was authentic, romantic, and without a tourist in sight. Fast forward several decades

... and the once-sleepy villages are now on Instagram bucket lists and mobbed in high season by organized tours and cruise-ship excursions.

The resident population of the five towns (Monterosso, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola and Riomaggiore) is just four thousand — but it's estimated that some 2.5 million travelers visit annually. And it's not just foreign tourists who flock here: Italians love the Cinque Terre too.

The result, especially when day-trippers hit, is that trains and station platforms are often mob scenes, the iconic coastal hiking trail becomes almost impassable, and the towns' tiny lanes are clogged to bursting. Even so, I still recommend this seductive corner of Italy. You can (and should) have a wonderful time here. Avoid the worst of the logjams by following these tips:

Consider your timing. April can be ideal, with fewer crowds and cooler temperatures. The busiest months are May, June, September and October; July and August can be less congested (but hotter). Avoid holiday weekends — especially Easter Sunday and Liberation Day (April 25). I thought reports of catastrophic crowds were exaggerated ... until I was there over a three-day weekend. On one recent Easter, 95,000 visitors to little Vernazza caused shoulder-to-shoulder gridlock.

Sleep in the Cinque Terre — not nearby. The towns of Levanto and La Spezia are near the Cinque Terre and well connected by train, making them popular home bases. But it's easier to take advantage of the cool, relaxed and quiet morning and evening hours if you're sleeping in one of the five towns.

Skip town at midday. Cruisers and day-trippers start pouring into the Cinque Terre around 10 a.m. and typically head out by 5 p.m. Those midday hours are your time to hit the beach or find a hike away from the main trails. Be a reverse commuter: Leave town during the day and come back in the late afternoon, just as the crowds are thinning out.

Hire your own boat. If the regularly scheduled boats between towns are overwhelmed, consider hiring your own boat to zip you to the next village. Captains hang out at each town's harbor, offering one-way transfers to other towns, sightseeing cruises and more. It's cheaper than you might think (about \$35–60) and very affordable if you split it among three or four travelers.

Figure out alternative, crowd-free activities. When the towns and trails are jammed, find something fun to do that's off the beaten path. For example, pick a scenic spot for a wine tasting (the Cinque Terre is known for its white wine made from bosco grapes) or sign up for a pesto-making class (the tasty basil-and-nut sauce originated here).

Hike smartly. Most travelers aim for



DOMINIC ARIZONA BONICELLI/RickSteves.com

The picture-perfect setting of the tiny Cinque Terre villages (in this case, Riomaggiore) draws millions of tourists annually.

the well-known main coastal trail, which can be a human traffic jam and very hot at midday. Making things even worse, recent landslides have closed two key segments of the trail, pushing more hikers onto the remaining pathway. If you're determined to hike it, go early (by 8 a.m.) or late (around 4 or 5 p.m.). Before setting out on an evening hike, find out when the sun will set — there's no lighting on the trails.

Escape to alternative trails and towns. If you hear that it'll be a busy cruise day, plan your activities elsewhere. If you'd like to hit the beach but Monterosso's is a parking lot of bodies, hop the train a few

minutes to nearby Levanto, rent a bike, and pedal on a level path to the delightful (and far less-crowded) beaches at Bonassola or Framura.

You don't have to join the tourist conga line on the coastal trail either. The entire Cinque Terre is crisscrossed with hiking trails where you'll scarcely encounter another person. The offices of the Cinque Terre national park (there's one in each town) are a great resource for learning about your options.

Rick Steves (ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Tuebingen celebrates chocolate

Through the weekend, a charming university city on the banks of the Neckar River plays host to Germany's largest chocolate market.

Through Dec. 8, more than 100 chocolate makers are in Tuebingen to tempt all comers with their tasty products as part of the annual Chocolat festival. The program offers tastings, exhibitions, cooking demos, chocolate art and a themed walking trail. The city's cafes and restaurants offer special chocolate-themed menus, and on Saturday, shops stay open until 10 p.m. Not least, the facades of the beautiful half-timbered buildings lining the narrow streets of the Old Town are brought to life with creative illuminations. Entry is free. Online: chocolart.de

Germany's standout markets and festivities

On the lookout for a German Christmas market with that extra special something that sets it apart? The second weekend of Advent offers plenty of choice in terms of both location and special events.

Stately settings: **Maulbronn Monastery:** traditional handicrafts and natural products are sold from some 120 stalls in this UNESCO-listed



Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Traveler blog: stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler

monastery Dec. 7–8. Entry is free. Online: kloster-maulbronn.de

Island of Frauenchiemsee: Germany's only island Christmas market offers some 90 stalls selling arts and crafts and culinary specialties Dec. 6–8. To reach the island, take a steamship from the Prien/Stock harbor; tickets cost 12.30 euros adults and 6.10 euros for children. Online: christkindmarkt-frauenchiem.de

Hohenzollern Castle: The Royal Christmas Market takes place in the spectacular ancestral home of the Prussian Royal family Dec. 6–8. You'll find a broad spectrum of exhibitors, live music and walking acts. Entry costs 10 euros adults; ages 15 and under get in free. Online: burg-hohenzollern.com

Unique events:

Krampus at the Munich Christmas Market: About 300 of the shaggy, scary masked creatures known as the Krampus descend from their Alpine lairs to scare naughty children into their best behavior from 3 p.m.–5 p.m. Dec. 8 at the Marienplatz. Online: tinyurl.com/ya4t3ebk

Torchlit swim in Bernkastel-Kues: More than 100 swimmers bearing lit torches swim down the Mosel River, followed by St. Nicholas in his boat. The swimmers take on the 1.2 km stretch between Kueser Hafen and Alter Moselbahnhof Bernkastel from 6 p.m. Dec. 7. Online: tinyurl.com/wrc058ku

Stollenfest in Dresden: Dresden celebrates its signature sweet, the Christstollen, on Dec. 7 with the unveiling of giant, freshly baked pastry, a baker's parade and entertainment on a stage in front of the Kulturpalast. The parade begins at 11 a.m. Online: dresdnerstollen.com/de/stollenfest

Mountain parades in the Ore Mountains: Christmas is a big deal in the Erzgebirge mountains of Saxony, where the carving of wooden ornaments such as nutcrackers and smokers is practiced year around. Another important tradition here is that of Bergparaden, or Mountain parades. Men dressed in their best uniforms, often with tools in



JENS MEYER/AP

Baker Ralf Ullrich works on a giant Stollen in Dresden, Germany. Dec. 1. The traditional fruit loaf, or Christstollen, will be unveiled at the Dresden Stollen Festival on Dec. 7.

hands, step in time to marching bands. On Dec. 7, catch parades in Stollberg starting at 2 p.m.; a torchlit one in Freiberg from 5:30 p.m., or in Brand-Erbisdorf at 6 p.m. On Dec. 8, a parade takes place in Schneeberg from 4:30 p.m. Later dates include a parade in Seiffen at 3:30 p.m. Dec. 14 and in Annaberg-Buchholz from 1:30 p.m. Dec. 22. Online: tinyurl.com/w3xg5m8

New Christmas market in Vienna

Visitors to Vienna at Advent time have a new activity for their to-do lists. The Christmas mar-

ket in the Inner Courtyard of the Stable Castle offers handicrafts from Lower Austria's artisans alongside culinary delights. Refreshment is served at the elegant, circular Red Bull bar. A sparkling Pegasus statue with a 32-foot wingspan will serve as one of the focal points, but the famous Lipizzaner horses of the Spanish Riding School themselves will observe the action from their outdoor stalls.

The market is open 4 p.m.–10 p.m. daily through Jan. 6, except for Dec. 24–26 and 30 and Jan. 1. Entry is free. Online: tinyurl.com/rwroyat

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Europe



JOHN VANDIVER/Stars and Stripes

Burger Place in Stuttgart specializes in the Canadian specialty poutine, which is french fries with cheese curds and gravy.

More than a french fry

Burger Place serves up Canadian specialty

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

The french fry, which belongs with ketchup, gets defiled in so many ways. The Dutch and Belgians dump on the mayo. The Finns like them topped with sliced sausage, pineapple and pickle. The list of offenders seems endless.

As for the Canadians, they like it served with cheese curds and covered in gravy. They call it poutine, a word that has about as much auditory appeal as poo. But I've heard people rave about our northern neighbor's take on the humble fry. It took me living in Germany to finally give it a try.

In Stuttgart's Zuffenhausen neighborhood, not far from Porsche's headquarters, sits the simply named "Burger Place." Canadian flags, hockey memorabilia and pictures from the north country fill the rustic eatery. The specialties are of course burgers and the aforementioned poutine.

On a recent lunchtime visit, I asked to try the Canadian staple, which originated in Quebec. While the restaurant offers poutine variations with numerous toppings, the owner, who lived in Canada for many years before returning to Stuttgart, suggested I try the classic version as a first timer.

What to say? Normally, I like my fries crispy, but these were mushy in the gravy. The cheese curds added a funk unfamiliar when eaten in combination with the fry.

Still, while being of the view that ketchup is the only appropriate french fries accompaniment, I couldn't help but enjoy this hearty dish that broadened my skeptical fry horizons.

Another upshot: the restaurant also serves bottles from Stuttgart's Cast brewery, which has been slowly making craft beer inroads in a city where tastes still tend toward established German classics.

Other things on the menu also looked enticing. Burger Place's burgers are made in all kinds of ways. There's a peanut butter and pickle burger, one with grilled pear, and a Canadian-inspired patty with maple syrup. Burger Place also makes Slappy Joes.

But after my large size poutine (about \$8), I was filled up and had to put the burgers off for another time.

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AFTER
HOURS
GERMANY



JOHN VANDIVER/Stars and Stripes

Burger Place, in Stuttgart's Zuffenhausen section, is a Canadian-themed eatery with a large burger menu.

BURGER PLACE

Location: 37 Schwieberdinger Str., Stuttgart
Hours: Monday to Thursday, 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m., 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 11:30 a.m. - 10:30 p.m.

Cost: Burgers around \$10, poutine specialties between \$5 and \$10.

Menu: English available

Information: Online: burger.place

— John Vandiver

Beyond chocolate: Testing other baking chip flavors

BY BECKY KRISTAL
The Washington Post

Chocolate chips are far and away the king of the hill when it comes to baking morsels. They are versatile, delicious and infinitely snackable straight from the bag. I always have a package (or three) of semisweet or bittersweet in my pantry. White chocolate chips are a staple as well. But what about when you want something different? Something more colorful? Something that will make your tasters stop mid-bite in (hopefully) appreciation of a unique flavor?

Enter what I'm calling the alternative baking chip flavors. We held an informal taste test to vet some of the options out there, especially now that holiday baking season is hard on our heels. Below find our thoughts and a few suggestions for using them — the ones we liked, anyway.

Butterscotch

We tried two brands, Guittard and Nestle Toll House. Had we tasted them separately, it would be hard to recall any difference. While we liked them both, we gave a slight edge to Guittard, which had a less cloying sweetness and more butter in the butterscotch. One person said the Nestle chips tasted sort of fake.

I happen to love butterscotch chips in pancakes, with or without chocolate thrown into the mix. Butterscotch chips play a starring role in Seven-Layer Bars (also known as Hello Dolly Bars). Swap them in for chocolate chips in an oatmeal cookie. They're also a natural pairing with apple.

Mint

This was another Guittard-Nestle showdown, and again, both were acceptable with a slight preference for the Guittard. The Guittard chips reminded tasters of both mint ice cream and the buttermints you may have grown up scooping out of the bowl at your local Chinese restaurant. The Nestle mint chips, which come mixed in a bag with chocolate, were a little more astringent, with a flavor reminiscent of Andes mints.

Mint is, of course, a natural pairing with chocolate. We'd fold the green chips into any brownie of your choosing or a chewy chocolate cookie. Incorporate them into a ganache or chocolate frosting. Mint chips would also work in chocolate bark.

Caramel

We could hardly stop eating the Hershey's sea salt caramel chips, which boasted actual crunchy salt we could feel. The Ghirardelli caramel chips definitely had more buttery flavor (it reminded me of Werther's Original), although we found the chalky texture off-putting.

Caramel chips would be a useful substitute for the butterscotch chips in the aforementioned seven-layer bars.

Naturally, they would also be right at home in basically any kind of drop cookie or blondie. The Hershey's chips would be particularly excellent in a chocolate chip cookie, and we're very much into the idea of adding caramel chips to a peanut butter cookie.

Coffee-ish

This was not the strongest group. Unfortunately, we cannot endorse the Nestle espresso chips, which tasted bitter and burned, like coffee left sitting in the carafe on the coffee maker too long. The Baileys Original Irish Cream chips (sold by Clabber Girl) were not great, albeit passable. The Baileys flavor was pretty much undetectable, and we're skeptical it would be there at all once baked. Of the three, we liked the Rex Coffee espresso chips the best (another Clabber Girl product), though they, too, were weak on the coffee flavor. They were more like dark chocolate chips than anything else.

Coffee and chocolate are an ideal couple, so like the mint chips, we'd be tempted to use at least the Rex chips in brownies or ganache.

Peanut butter

This was another disappointingly meh entry from Nestle, also mixed with chocolate chips. "I don't know what's going on there," one tester said. "The chocolate doesn't taste like chocolate, and the peanut butter is really weak," added another. The Reese's, however, more than made up for its lackluster competition. As you might expect, the chips taste just like the inside of a Reese's peanut butter cup. Nothing wrong with that!

Peanut butter chips in banana muffins would channel a classic after-school snack. Consider them for ganache and frosting, as well.

Cinnamon

Hershey's for the win again. Their cinnamon chips were unabashedly cinnamony, almost bordering on Big Red gum or Red Hot candy, but we liked them nonetheless. Baking with them, especially in a buttery treat, would help counteract the boldness.

The first use we all thought of was scones. While we're well aware that a great snickerdoodle needs no additions, if you want to chip up your batch, these would be a prime candidate.

Unicorn

Yes, we've saved the worst for last. In the words of one taster, these colorful chips from Nestle were "vile." How could something that tastes like nothing also taste so bad?

In our opinion, they're purely decorative. Sure, add some unicorn bling to your gingerbread house, as long as you don't plan on eating the chips.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe



PHOTOS BY KELLY SMITH, MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE/TNS

The tiny village of Gasadalur on the island of Vagar is near what's become one of the most famous attractions on the Faroe Islands: the Mulaufossur waterfall. The number of tourists visiting the islands has increased steadily in recent years.



Top: Mykines, one of the 18 islands, is known for its puffin colony and other sea birds such as gannets, large white birds that breed only on Mykines. **Center:** A boat tour weaves along the Vestmanna bird cliffs and caves in the Faroe Islands. **Bottom:** Kirkjubour is known as a historic village with a medieval cathedral. The Faroe Islands are also known for its large sheep population, which outnumbers the 50,000 residents.

The land of 10,000 waterfalls

The Faroe Islands offer stunning views and room to breathe

By KELLY SMITH
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

The grassy island with its sheer rocky cliffs jutted from the sea, not a tree in sight.

As I hiked along a footpath, I saw the snow-capped mountains of other islands in the distance. Seabirds squawked and soared through the blue skies. From the stout red and white lighthouse perched at the end of the island — the object of my hike — the sea stretched endlessly across the horizon.

I felt like I had reached the end of the Earth.

It was merely the far tip of Kalsoy Island, one of the most northerly of the bustling Faroe Islands.

I'd come for that sense of remote wonder, but I was just one of an increasing number of people who seek out these tiny specks on the map between Scotland and Iceland. Travelers come for the panoramic vistas, waterfalls, puffins — and paradoxically, an escape from the crowds.

A few years ago, the stunning views were largely left to the island's 50,000 residents. But since 2013, the number of tourists has increased an average of 10% a year, according to Visit Faroe Islands. In 2018, a record 120,000 people visited the volcanic isles.

"Instagram is probably the biggest reason people come," 25-year-old farmer Johannus Kallsgrar told me, lighting a cigarette. "We're all over Instagram."

Since 1698, his forebears have lived in Trolaness, a village on Kalsoy with only three families who for generations have made a living by raising sheep and rappelling cliffs to collect bird eggs. The village became reachable by car when tunnels were carved through mountains in the 1980s, but it remained isolated — until tourists began arriving a few years ago, lured by dramatic images of mountain peaks from a lighthouse. Now Kallsgrar said his once secluded land gets 20,000 visitors a year, forging dirt paths that didn't exist centuries before.

Although the farmer is now a part-time tourist guide, it hasn't all been a boon for him. Overflow crowds park cars on his fields; some hikers litter and others leave his red



A guide leads a tour of Saksun, a village with a lagoon on the island of Streymoy, one of 18 islands that are part of the Faroe Islands.

gate open, allowing his sheep to escape. If a hiker is injured, Kallsgrar calls a helicopter rescue, a free service for the hiker.

The volcanic islands are part of the Kingdom of Denmark, but they are self-governed with their own flag, culture, language and distinctive landscape — a secluded paradise for visitors who can island-hop by ferry, helicopter or car through tunnels under the sea. With a few exceptions, they offer largely free, unfettered access to the scenery. But last April, the islands temporarily shut down major sites for maintenance. Some farmers are starting to impose fees to trek across their land.

While the number of travelers is a sliver of what other places draw, the small Faroe Islands are trying to keep up with their growing popularity. The islands, which encompass an area half the size of Rhode Island, were voted the top destination by National Geographic Traveler's readers in 2015.

Since then, Airbnbs have popped up. Two hotels, including the first chain hotel, a Hilton Garden Inn, were being built when I visited last spring in the capital, Torshavn.

"It's a little dot on the map, but there's a lot of things going on here," said David Whale, a British transplant who co-owns Heimdal Tours.

Visitors are drawn to the fresh air and dramatic mountain and North Atlantic vistas as an antidote to their fast-paced life, he said. "You come here and literally take that deep breath."

In fact, there are only five traffic lights and more sheep than residents across the 18 main islands, known for windy and wet weather.

"It becomes the land of 10,000 waterfalls," Whale said.

I made my solo weeklong trip before peak summer tourism. To save money and avoid driving alone through narrow, dark one-way mountain tunnels, I skipped a car rental — a challenge for sightseeing on any island, but even more so in a place with limited public transit and an emerging tourism industry.

Instead, I booked tours with two companies, which offered excursions only on certain days, a scheduling challenge. I also relied on public ferries, buses and a helicopter, all of which had limited hours and destinations. In a pinch, I hitched rides from an American, an Irish couple and other kind strangers along the way.

The sun was shimmering on the sapphire blue ocean when I boarded a ferry on the island of Vagar, heading to Mykines, the westernmost island.

The boat passed mountains dusted with snow as the red, white and blue Faroe flag whipped in the cool wind at the stern. Other tourists and I gawked at Drangarnir, iconic sea stacks with a slanted top and doorway-shaped hole in the middle, and the islet of Tindharmur, its five sharp peaks rising above us. In the distance, the waterfall Mulaufossur plunged over a cliff into the ocean next to mountains and the tiny village of Gasadalur.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

FROM PAGE 30

The ferry usually sails twice a day each way, but bad weather can halt it, as an American I met found out and was stranded overnight.

Most visitors paid the \$15 fee to hike on their own. (The collected money goes toward protecting the island's iconic bird life and nature.) But about a dozen of us joined Heini Heinesen, 67, whose father was the last lighthouse keeper. The fit retiree with a gray beard walked with a wooden hiking stick, leading us on unmarked paths as he chatted about the history and climate. He paused as if deep in thought.

"What do you hear? You'll hear nature only," he said in a hushed, reverent voice. "It's beautiful."

He pointed to white and gray fulmars flying overhead and big gannets diving into the sea. At the puffin colony, the whish-whish sound of thousands of birds filled the air. A sign urged viroing, respect, for the birds, and Heinesen hustled us past.

Eight people live year-round on Mykines, but the island now attracts 15,000 visitors a year, he said. He worries people will destroy the puffin colony and suggested limiting the number of ferry passengers or restricting walks through the area during nesting. "We just have to control it more," he said.

According to Visit Faroe Islands, two-thirds of residents viewed tourism as a "net positive" in 2018, but a majority want legislation related to access to nature. The tourist agency has a new plan to preserve its land and said it will advocate for a "nature preservation fee" for visitors.

In Klaksvík, the second-largest city (pop. 5,000), I felt guilty as I boarded my first-ever helicopter ride.

Some locals lament visitors' use of government-subsidized helicopters (my 15-minute trip cost \$32), which is vital transportation for residents. However, the tourist board and guide books tout island hopping by helicopter. Without a car, it was an efficient way back to Torshavn, on the island of Streymoy, gliding over the sea, villages and windmills below.

Nearby, Tinganes, red government buildings with grass roofs, stand in an area that was once the Vikings' general assembly. Evidence of Irish and Viking roots are scattered across the islands — from Viking burial grounds to Kirkjubour, a settlement from the Middle Ages.

The Faroes are also known for hunting pilot whales. One guide said about 1,000 whales of the hundreds of thousands of whales in the region are killed a year and the meat is shared among locals — more Earth-friendly than shipping food from far-away places, he said. They also rely on sheep and fish and can't grow much beyond rhubarb and potatoes.

As we returned to Torshavn, the tour driver snacked on dried whale pieces as if they were chips. Gray clouds rolled in as we zipped by rowers paddling across a lake and sheep dotting fields. I marveled at waterfalls cascading down hillsides around every bend and hoped that the Faroes would find the right balance between protecting its raw landscape and welcoming visitors who come to see that very thing.

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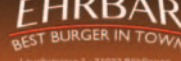


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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Pacific

Tracking tigers

Tourists go on safaris around India's countryside hoping for a glimpse of royalty

By MARK JOHANSON
Chicago Tribune

I'm swaddled in a mess of blankets to fight the pre-dawn chill as I bump down the dusty dirt roads of India's Kanha National Park in an open-air safari jeep.

My guide, Prabhat Verma of PureQuest Adventures, is brimming with optimism. But it's my third trip past the park's green gates, and I've yet to lock eyes with the creature I flew halfway around the world to meet.

You can go to Africa for cheetahs or lions, but for Bengal tigers, your best bet is the wildlife reserves at the heart of the Indian subcontinent in the so-called "Tiger State" of Madhya Pradesh. Somewhere up ahead are nearly 100 of these regal cats, who prowl 360 square miles of pristine Indian wilderness. Even so, there are no guarantees I'll see one.

Straddling the Maikal Hills of the Satpura Range, Kanha is a vast landscape of sal tree forests and wide-open savannas that's a four-hour drive from the nearest airport in the diminutive regional capital of Raipur.

On morning and afternoon safaris the day before, we followed fresh tiger tracks in the park's talc-soft dirt to dead ends. The spotter in my safari jeep flicked his binoculars left and right, though his ears were doing the real work. He heeded the warning calls of langur monkeys (who scan the perimeter from treetops) and spotted deer (who smell tigers from a mile away) — all to no avail.

We've seen some discrete peacocks ambling through the woods, a pair of jackals racing down a meadow and a rare barasingha swamp deer hiding in the brush. We've photographed a menagerie of colorful kingfishers and watched termites build sandcastle-like mounds out of the burnt-orange earth. I know deep down this ought to make me happy, that all animals should carry equal clout. But the tiger is such a rare beast; it would be cruel not to get at least one glance at its striped orange robe.

According to the World Wildlife Fund, only about 3,890 tigers are left in the wild. India is home to 70 percent of them, and its role in ensuring the big cat's survival can't be understated. Tiger numbers in India are believed to have dropped from about 40,000 at the beginning of the 19th century to just 1,800 in the early 1970s, when India launched the conservation program Project Tiger.

Kanha was one of the original nine reserves set up under that program (there are now 50), and I've come here to witness a rare good news story in global conservation. Preliminary results of India's latest tiger census suggest that the nation's tiger population will rise from 2,226 in 2014 to more than 3,000 in 2019.

A fresh round of deer calls sends us racing to a forested ridge like the paparazzi with cameras at the ready. I take a big gulp of the crisp morning air, which has the tang of a fresh cut lemon, and wait in silence for something — anything — to happen.

A few restless minutes go by. Just as I'm starting to feel deflated, the tigress appears atop the ridge, flaunting a kind of self-assurance only apex predators possess. Her muscles tighten with each step as she surveys the land, her coat shin-



A tigress walks along a ridgeline in Kanha National Park.

PHOTOS BY MARK JOHANSON, CHICAGO TRIBUNE/TNS



A male tiger lounges in the brush of Bandhavgarh National Park.



Gray langurs have a symbiotic relationship with deer in the parks of Madhya Pradesh, warning of approaching tigers.

ing under the low spotlight of the morning sun. She is, by all accounts, Indian royalty.

In the excitement of the moment I've somehow missed the larger tiger — her mate — hiding in the brush. She walks over to him, brandishes her 2-inch canines and lies down for the briefest of moments before they retreat into the darkness of the forest. The whole scene lasts all of five minutes, but it's so cinematic, it feels as if I've watched an entire nature special in the flesh.

Back at the Kanha Earth Lodge, a well-camouflaged safari camp in the park's buffer zone, we toast to a successful day with a potent toddy made by the local Baiga tribe from the flowers of the sacred

mahua tree. It tastes sour, but our spirits are high. We've prowled the lands that inspired Rudyard Kipling's "The Jungle Book," and we've faced our very own Shere Khan.

We feel privileged, even if we know we're hardly alone. Madhya Pradesh historically has had far fewer tourists than the more popular Indian states of Rajasthan or Kerala, but visitor numbers doubled in 2017 following the live-action remake of "The Jungle Book." With Netflix picking up the storyline in its 2018 feature "Mowgli," the buzz around India's languid heartland continues unabated.

Electric with the thrill of a first tiger sighting, we set off on a four-hour drive

to Bandhavgarh National Park, another tiger-rich reserve with forested hills. Bandhavgarh was, until 1968, the hunting grounds of a former Indian prince, who plucked the last white tiger from the wild here in the 1950s. While these genetic aberrations may be gone, their standard orange-and-black brethren are thriving. I keep my binoculars peeled for sightings of them — as well as leopards, sloth bears and the rest of the "Jungle Book" crew. I'm treated instead to birds, monkeys and deer.

Back at my hotel, the suitably named King's Lodge, members of the local Gond

CONTINUED ON PAGE 33

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Pacific



Big flavor

Captain Kangaroo popular with tourists and locals for good reason

PHOTOS BY AYA ICHIHASHI/Stars and Stripes

Above: The Mexican Taco Burger from Captain Kangaroo on Okinawa features a chunky beef patty, melted cheese, guacamole, tomato, sour cream and chili beans. Below: The diner's exterior.

CAPTAIN KANGAROO

Location: Umuza 183, Nago City Okinawa 905-0006
Hours: 11 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. (They sell out quite often. Get there early!)

Prices: Majority of burgers cost between 800 yen to 1,000 yen.

Dress: Casual

Directions: From Camp Foster, take the Okinawa Expressway and exit at Kyoda IC (No. 10). Stay on Route

58 to the Miyasato 3-Chome intersection then turn left onto Route 449. Drive a little over a half-mile. Captain Kangaroo is on the left.

Parking: There is a big parking space across the street from the restaurant. Several more slots are available in back and in front.

Information: 0980-54-3698; Online: roo-bar.jp

—Aya Ichihashi



By AYA ICHIHASHI
Stars and Stripes

Imagine a juicy meat patty blanketed by warm melted cheese, topped with delicious guacamole, crispy lettuce and a tangy tomato slice. Ladle over it a spoonful of chili sauce and sandwich it all nicely in a chewy, toasty sesame-seed bun.

Welcome to Captain Kangaroo in Nago, Okinawa, about an hour's drive north on the Okinawa Expressway from Camp Foster and Kadena Air Base.

The diner is popular — I mean really popular — and attracts locals, service members and tourists from around the world. I usually avoid going there during the busy touristy seasons such as summer, spring break, Golden Week or any local national holiday and weekends.

At peak lunchtime, expect to wait one to two hours, sometimes longer.

My suggestion is to get there around 10:45 a.m. to beat the lunchtime crowds, or simply place a to-go order over the phone and eat on the seawall behind the restaurant.

I have been coming to this burger diner for at least seven years, and its quality has not diminished; I think it's getting even better. Every time I have the first bite of my usual order, the Mexican Taco Burger (900 yen, or about \$8.30), it tastes as good as the very first time.

So far I have tried the classic Roo's Special Burger, a beef patty, lettuce, cheese, tomato and special sauce for 800 yen; the BBQ Burger (800 yen); Japanese Chicken Burger (800 yen); and the Great Teriyaki Burger (800



yen); but I always come back to my usual.

Captain Kangaroo's meat is one of a kind. It's almost like finely chopped steak tips. The garlic and onion seasoning, black pepper and other secret spices add the perfect flavor. And the patty is cooked perfectly; it's not at all dry or chewy.

Even the lettuce is perfect — it's kept in ice-cold water to maintain crispness. The guacamole and sour cream add some sweetness and mildness to the delicious patty, and the chili sauce is made with ground meat and kidney beans. I could not ask for a better burger.

Lastly, and most importantly, they toast their specially ordered buns until the sesame seeds get nicely brown, adding a nutty flavor to the whole creation.

If you see a 10-inch-tall burger at the restaurant, that's the Sparky Burger (1,000 yen), Captain Kangaroo's social media star. Fans post their efforts to conquer this Mount Everest of the burger world.

The Sparky comes with 5-inch-tall, thin strips of fried onion beautifully piled up like an art piece atop a juicy beef patty, lettuce, tomato, BBQ sauce and crispy bacon. I have never tried the burger because of its size, but I dare you to.

aya.ichihashi@stripes.com
Twitter: @ayajichihashi

FROM PAGE 32

tribe dance by an evening bonfire. They gyrate to songs about nature, animals and working the land — all to a mildly hypnotic beat.

Madhya Pradesh has the largest tribal population of any Indian state, according to the 2011 census. These agrarian communities play an integral role in protecting the tiger, even though they were historically left out of the process (and in some cases, forcibly removed from parklands). Thanks to changes in government policy, they're now employed as spotters and guides and have a tangible incentive to keep the tigers alive.

On my final afternoon safari through Bandhavgarh, the sunset is a glorious affair of golden light and crisp air. I feel lucky to have spent a few days far from the crowds in this nation of 1.3 billion. I'm even content that I may not find another tiger — that is, until the tiger finds me.

A local naturalist says the creature lounging in the brush in front of us is a 4-year-old male who must soon fight his dad for this patch of the park or leave for greener pastures. His fate strikes me as harsh, but also surprisingly normal, which, for tigers these days, is kind of a big deal.



MARK JOHANSON, CHICAGO TRIBUNE/TNS

A wildlife spotter from the local Baiga tribe scans the horizon in Kanha National Park.

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

When you're the popular girl

Twitter users offer tongue-in-cheek ways to thin crowds around Mona Lisa

By NATALIE B. COMPTON
The Washington Post

During every minute of the Louvre Museum's operating hours, tourists crowd en masse to see the world's most famous painting in all its glory. Hanging behind sealed bulletproof glass, the Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci didn't rise to meteoric fame until after it was stolen in 1911. Today, it draws millions of visitors annually. But many leave their visit underwhelmed.

Then came a hot take from Jason Farago, art critic for the New York Times. In his piece "It's Time to Take Down the Mona Lisa," Farago calls the painting "a security hazard, an educational obstacle and not even a satisfying bucket-list item" and calls for the oft-hailed masterpiece to be moved to a space built just for her.

Twitter erupted in a respective tweetstorm, with the social media platform's users firing off a range of responses. A lot of people seemed to have stopped reading at the headline and thought Farago wanted to do away with the painting completely. Others sent their ideas — facetious fixes and solid suggestions alike — for how to improve the situation. Here are our seven favorite solutions, from the practical to the ludicrous.

Make a Mona scavenger hunt

Instead of featuring only the one true Mona Lisa, place a few fake copies around the Louvre and let people guess which one is real, according to one Twitter user. Farago noted in his story that there's no other painting at the museum with a crowding problem, and Marc Breaux's solution would take the crowding away from the singular Mona. Verifying paintings, even da Vinci's works, is a hotly contested topic anyway. Why not throw more fakes into the mix?

Ban smartphone use in the gallery

People aren't necessarily clamoring to catch a glimpse of the painting itself, but to get a photo of it or with it. Political writ-

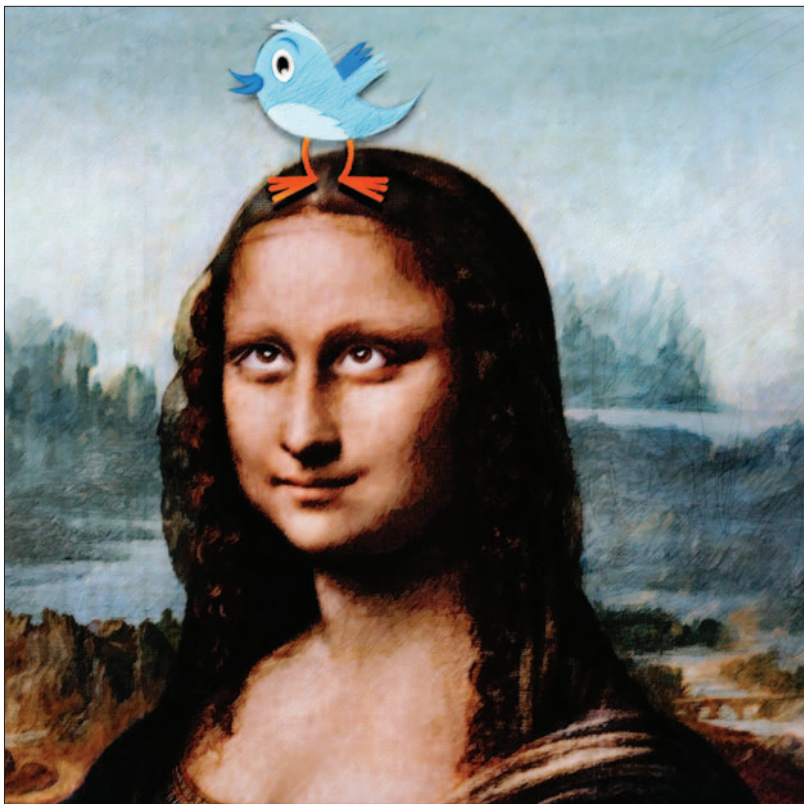


ILLUSTRATION BY NOGA AMI-RAV/Stars and Stripes

The Mona Lisa sees nearly 10 million visitors a year, which can make visiting the Louvre in Paris a miserable affair. Twitter users have offered solutions and ideas for thinning out the crowds and making the experience more enjoyable.

er Susan Milligan argues that if photography were banned, the crowds would be less chaotic. Not everyone will vibe with her solution; if you don't take a Mona Lisa picture, did you even visit? We're just supposed to tell people that we saw it? In 2019, you need Instagram proof of your fine art adventures. Or at least a photograph that will live on an iPad for eternity.

Move the Mona Lisa to Marseille

Paris does not need any help drawing tourists. Why not encourage those 10 million people who went to see the Mona Lisa last year to see a different French city altogether? That's what one Twitter user recommended.

While Farago argued for a move to the United Arab Emirates, Stephen Smith first offers the suggestion of keeping the painting in the family and shipping it to Marseille. It'd be a tourism boost for any French city outside of the capital, and it would probably cut down the number of

visitors anyway to only those willing to make the trip.

Steal the Mona Lisa

We do not endorse this one, but GQ editor Chris Gayomali throws in a wild card with the suggestion to steal the Mona Lisa. Considering the painting went whatever the 1911 equivalent of viral was when it was first stolen, it could work magic again today. The move would create a new media firestorm leading up to the painting's move to Marseille.

Make the Mona Lisa into a festival

Millennials have been blamed for killing a number of once-loved things, from cereal to the diamond industry. Is the generation to blame for killing the Mona Lisa, too? A millennial-caused problem deserves a millennial-approved solution. Combine the generation's penchant for travel experiences and music festivals by creating a festival dedicated to da Vinci's

painting, complete with a hot local food lineup, noteworthy musical headliners and long lines for porta-potties.

Destroy all famous art

In a "this is why we can't have nice things" move, Sean O'Neal calls for a destruction not just of the Mona Lisa, but also all major works of art. We've proved that we can't handle the heat, so it's time to get out of the creative kitchen completely. Leave us with lesser-known artwork until we learn how to behave in the big leagues.

Give her bangs

The Cut magazine came in with what they called a solution, not a cancellation, that many women turn to in life: The Mona Lisa should just get bangs. It might not fix your problems, but adding fringe is an easy tweak that at least feels life-changing. Just don't give the job to the artist who touched up that painting of Jesus in Borja, Spain.

WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

Jazzy eco-friendly gift wrap ideas

Fabric among trendy alternatives to traditional paper and throwaways

By KATHERINE ROTH
Associated Press

The trend in gift wrapping this holiday season is toward jazzy yet sustainable options. Consider beautifully folded fabrics or understated brown or green masking paper topped with colorful washi tape or sprigs of green instead of easily crushed store-bought bows.

"There's a lot of fun stuff going on in gift wrap these days," says Amy Panos, home editor at Better Homes and Gardens.

"People still like paper, of course, but there's a lot of interest in wrapping gifts in fabric," she says. There's the Japanese technique of furoshiki, in which the wrapping cloth becomes part of the gift. "Or you can use a scarf or pretty tea towel, then fold it like origami," Panos says.

Tenugui cloth, similar to furoshiki but rectangular instead of square, can also be used as an alternative to traditional gift wrapping.

There are books showing how to wrap gifts in cloth, a gift-wrapping solution in Japan for centuries. Furoshiki come in various sizes, fabrics and patterns.

For unusually large gifts — and an easier wrapping job — decorative pillowcases are a good option, says Tanya Graff, style editor at Martha Stewart Living.

"Overall, the trend is definitely away from throwaway options and toward a more eco-minded approach," she says.

Pretty boxes are another great and reusable way to present a gift, says Graff.

"You could try decorating a box with decoupage, so that the box is a part of the gift itself. Or cover a stack of hatboxes in marbled paper. You can put gifts inside," she says. "Boxes can also be embellished with stick-on rhinestones."

As much thought should go into the gift wrapping as into the gift itself, she explains. "That way, the wrapping can be a part of the gift or can be reused," she says.

Many people still prefer paper of course, but Panos and Graff say the aesthetic is changing.

"One thing we're seeing is a very Scandinavian look, with lots of browns and reds and naturals," says Graff.

Panos agrees. "Brown Kraft paper, like the kind of paper grocery bags are made of, is fantastic. It's multipurpose, inexpensive, and looks great with any kind

of ribbon or bow. It's also easy to dress up with colorful ribbon or sprigs of greenery," she says.

Holiday ornaments are also a great gift topper, she says. Or if you're traveling and want a gift that packs flat, as opposed to something with a bow, try making a sort of "belly band" of some interesting leftover wallpaper or wrapping paper for a pretty and less-bulky gift-wrapping solution.

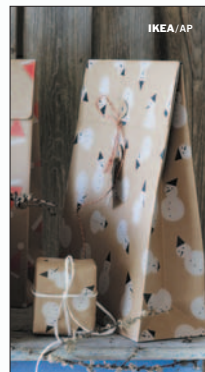
Decorative washi tape, which comes in a wide range of patterns and colors, is another trendy alternative to ribbon.

Masking paper, which is typically green, is another good alternative to wrapping paper. "It's what painters typically spread across the floor before they start painting," explains Panos. You can buy rolls of it at a hardware store, and "it looks amazing with a bright red ribbon around it."

To save on gift tags, Panos suggests using pretty scraps of leftover paper, or writing directly on the package. She recommends that gift recipients save whatever ribbons or wrapping paper can be salvaged so they can be repurposed instead of ending up in a landfill.

A traditional Tenugui cloth, similar to furoshiki, can be used as an alternative to traditional gift wrapping.

PHOTOS BY MAX FLATOW, WUHAO NEWYORK INC./AP



WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

GAMER GIFTS

10 must-have items this holiday season

BY TODD MARTENS ■ Los Angeles Times

**Nintendo Switch Lite**

Nintendo's versatile console is now slightly more affordable, and its smaller size makes it more adorable. The trade-off is no television support, but you'll probably be playing the latest Pokemon in bed anyway. The Switch library gets better by the week, so if you're itching for a Zelda fix but also curious about today's best indie games, flipping on the Switch is a must.

\$199; amzn.to/2qRxJSY

LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

**Cuphead vinyl soundtrack**

Lovers of vintage cartoons have already discovered Cuphead, an excruciatingly difficult game inspired by the choppy, oval animation of the 1930s (its animated star Cuphead — and fellow character Mugman — are the stars of an upcoming Netflix series). But jazz fans are more recently getting hip to the game's double-LP big band soundtrack by Kristofer Maddigan (on vinyl no less), which topped Billboard's jazz chart — the first video game soundtrack to ever do so. It's a loving nod to the Duke Ellington era and a joyful celebration of a sound no longer in vogue.

\$40; amzn.to/2JvczB7

**Oculus Quest**

Virtual reality has long been the "next big thing," only to never really capture the general public's imagination. That's because it's expensive, and small devices tend to lack the processing power needed for a fulfilling experience. The Oculus Quest is the beginning of the end of that narrative, as this simple, portable device is capable enough to run many of today's most exciting VR experiences. It's finally a device for those who have been curious but holding off on getting real about virtual reality.

\$399-499; amzn.to/2p8SUjv

OCULUS

Disney Classic Games: Aladdin and The Lion King

Classic Disney films never really go away, as each generation gets a combination of re-releases and remakes. But classic Disney video games were once thought to be forever locked in the vault. Yet this loving package combines the SNES, Sega Genesis and Game Boy versions of games inspired by "Aladdin" (1992) and "The Lion King." (1994) and also loads them with extras. Play the games as they existed back in the day, or play with some blessedly modern tweaks such as in-game rewind and save features.

\$29.99; amzn.to/2WiRSNZ

DISNEY

**Sega Genesis Mini**

The 16-bit revolution was 30 years ago, but Sega is finally getting serious about its legacy — and the power of nostalgia. This teeny-tiny device packs 40 recognizable games, including the great hip-hop-inspired adventure ToeJam & Earl and the ahead-of-its-time love letter to the environment and oceanography that is Ecco the Dolphin. And yes, Sonic, everyone's favorite hedgehog, is there, too.

\$79.99; amzn.to/32VKB95

LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



Ring Fit Adventure

Think of this Nintendo Switch game and accessory as the next generation Wii Fit, one built around a circular device that resembles a Pilates ring. While it promises to teach you plenty of exercises and yoga poses, the real joy comes in battling a body-building dragon in fantastical landscapes. We're also excited to — and we're directly quoting Nintendo here — “craft pottery using squats.” Face it, everyone looks ridiculous in the middle of a workout, so why not turn those sessions into a game?

\$79.99; amzn.to/32U82Qb

Nintendo

St. Noire

Not quite a board game but not quite a video game either (but combining elements of both), St. Noire, developed in part by Atari co-founder Nolan Bushnell, is an exclusive-to-Amazon AI-powered game that has fun with the company's voice-activated Alexa devices. The light murder mystery can be played alone or as a party game with small groups. You're the detective, and your role is to interrogate the characters Alexa brings to life.

\$39.99; amzn.to/32TAG49

LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS



Dreamscape

Treat a friend, a loved one or even the whole family (up to six at a time) to a virtual reality getaway — at the Westfield Century City shopping center in Los Angeles. Dreamscape's virtual reality experiences aren't games as much as transportive adventures to imagined worlds, be it the deep sea, an inter-galactic zoo or an Indiana Jones-style expedition. It's the slickest VR experience around, and one (relatively) safe for squeamish stomachs. Adventures vary in length, but plan on 35 minutes from check-in to your

post-voyage gear removal.
\$20 per person, per experience;
dreamscapeimmersive.com

DREAMSCAPE IMMERSIVE/Stewart Cook



Marvel Dimension of Heroes

Bring the Marvel Universe into your family room with this augmented reality headset, compatible with many Apple and Android smartphones. With controls that fit your hands like mini-shields, this Lenovo device makes it easy to wave and flail to simulate many a superpower, be it those of Captain America or Dr. Strange. Just make sure you're not playing next to a lamp, as Dimension of Heroes doesn't have the power to stitch together broken glass.

\$249.99; amzn.to/2PwYXsZ

LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

Pokemon Sword and Pokemon Shield

It's been an especially good year to be a Pokemon fan, what with the film “Pokemon Detective Pikachu” and now with two new Nintendo Switch adventures in Pokemon Sword and Pokemon Shield. Explore new regions and discover new creatures in what promises to be two of the year's cutest role-playing games. Example: One new Pokemon is a purple ghost blob that lives in a broken teapot, ensuring that high tea will never be the same.

\$59.99; amzn.to/2MWPUzP

Nintendo



WEEKEND: BOOKS

Garbage and guilt

Where do our castoffs go? Adam Minter answers that question in 'Secondhand'

BY CONNIE NELSON
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

What happens to the set of heirloom china no one in the family wants? Where does your iPhone 5 end up? And do those piled jeggings from Zara really find a second life?

Adam Minter answers those questions and more in his riveting new book, "Secondhand: Travels in the New Global Garage Sale." Minter, the son of a Minneapolis scrap dealer, has worked in and written about what most of us consider garbage for most of his life. Now a Malaysia-based columnist for Bloomberg Opinion, he's followed his first book, "Junkyard Planet," with a travelogue that takes readers from Minnesota to Ghana, with stops in Arizona, Japan, Ontario and Benin.

We talked with Minter about garbage, guilt and why quality matters in our mass-produced world.

Star Tribune: You've got a lot of experience with castoffs, correct?

Minter: I say I was born in a junkyard. My family has been in the scrap business in north Minneapolis since the 1920s. Most of my time there was working in the office. But I have very early memories of being in the warehouse and separating plumbing parts.

You left Minneapolis but retained your interest in junk. Why?

It's what I know. I lived in China for 14 years and worked as a foreign correspondent, writing for scrap and recycling industry magazines.

Was that your inspiration for "Secondhand"?

One of the roots of this book was our struggle to deal with belongings after a family member passed away. It was a personal quest. I wanted to find out where my mom's stuff went after we dropped it off at the donation center. It's also about how our stuff affects us economically, socially, spiritually.

I expected your book to be a tirade against wanton consumerism, or at least a guilt trip about our throwaway culture. But you didn't go there. Why not?

It's pretty clear that if you start telling people what to do, it doesn't work. The environmental community has tried to get people to consume less for decades. People like shiny new things. I don't know why. Maybe it's built into our genes. I wanted to show people what the consequences are of getting rid of stuff.

What are those consequences?

From an environmental perspective, the best thing you can do is make something last as long as possible. But we live in an affluent society that has access to disposable fashion, disposable furniture. We—as Americans, Japanese, Europeans—are just throwing out more and more than the rest of the world wants.

I like to think that when I make a donation to Goodwill, Salvation Army or Arc, I'm helping someone out. Am I?

A thrift store in the U.S. only sells about a third of what's on its shelves. Some (of what doesn't sell) gets exported, the rest is recycled or sent to a dump.

And how exported goods drive a thriving international reuse market, which produces billions of dollars and

provides hundreds of thousands of jobs. What else is good about it?

People in emerging economies have access to goods much earlier than they would if they have to wait for the price of a new item to come down.

I was surprised to learn that people in emerging economies demand high-quality goods, that the cheap stuff so popular in the developed world doesn't sell. Why?

When your income is limited, quality is important.

You state that the decline in quality and the increased mass production of cheap goods threatens the reuse market. Why is that?

The price point of new is competing with the price point of secondhand. And if those prices are the same, people will buy new.

There seems to be a nascent reuse/reduce/recycle movement in the U.S. Does it have any hope?

There's more and more interest in sustainability. Basically, people want to consume and not feel guilty about it. I'm not against consuming. Remember, the secondhand market can't exist without people buying high-quality new stuff that can be sold and resold.

Might millennials cut back on consumption?

There's a lot of talk about millennials not wanting to buy stuff, opting for the shared economy. But research is starting to show that they're only in the shared economy if it's cheaper. And as they become more affluent, they want to consume more.

If you were king of the world, what would you decree?

I would implement durability labeling. A smartphone company should tell you how long they're going to support that model right on the box. An apparel company should tell you how many washings a garment was designed to withstand.

Secondhand

Adam Minter

Americans are an acquisitive people and their craving for ever more stuff ripples around the world, not always to the benefit of their neighbors or their excess or the environment.

Between 1967 and 2017, the amount of things Americans bought rose almost 20-fold, filling closets and garages and creating the self-storage industry. But, as Minter notes, Americans are only diverting to resale and reuse about 3 percent of potentially usable discarded clothing, furniture and other goods; the rest goes to dumps for another generation to worry about.

As Minter writes, the world is overflowing with clothes, furniture, electronics, kitchen appliances and toys and other stuff no longer wanted by the original owners. Moreover, the declining birth rates in advanced nations means the markets for their discarded goods have shrunk at home.

That's why that T-shirt given to Goodwill in Omaha may end up finding its next owner in Africa and the solid-wood cabinet from England may find its next home in Malaysia.

Secondhand is an anthem to decluttering, recycling, making better quality goods and living a simpler life with less stuff. The book is a compelling argument for tempering acquisitions, especially now that global warming compels people to rethink how they live.

And the facts of the secondhand industry are compelling.



BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING/TNS

"Junkyard Planet" author Adam Minter takes a journey into the surprising afterlives of our former possessions in "Secondhand: Travels in the New Global Garage Sale."

What else?

There should be right-to-repair laws. Repair information should be accessible to anyone. Trade barriers to secondhand goods around the world should be eliminated. Trade barriers exist in lots of places for lots of reasons. But I say if people want to use secondhand goods, they should be able to.

What are your suggestions for those of us who don't want to contribute to the landfills?

Think of the long-term cost of ownership. Your first concern shouldn't be the sticker price, but the quality. Pay more

now to pay less later. If you buy a higher-quality item, there's more likely to be a market for it when you don't want it anymore.

Try to repair before you replace. Flat-screen TVs break down all the time, but they're so easy to fix. You can watch tutorials on YouTube and buy any special tools you need online. Check out websites like shopjimmy.com or ifixit.com.

Don't overlook the secondhand market, especially parents. Most of the stuff has been used for a very brief time and is fairly high quality. Really look at (buying) secondhand.



Two decades ago, China was a major importer of secondhand clothes; now it is an exporter. Global clothing production doubled from 2000 to 2015 while the average number of times a garment was worn before disposal fell by a third.

A World Bank study says humanity is tracking to generate waste at twice the population growth by 2050. Businesses have sprung up to clear out the cluttered dwellings of the deceased. Television shows focus on the values in used items from yesterday.

Minter calls for several steps to alleviate the mountains of no-longer-wanted stuff that is clogging U.S. and other wealthy nations' households, steps he shows will benefit people everywhere:

■ Press for better quality, more durable goods, which will benefit consumers and the environment. Minter notes that particleboard furniture typically never makes a second move intact.

■ Change laws and values that keep used goods out of poor countries where people need them the most.

■ Recognize that the global trade in secondhand goods benefits the global economy and the environment.

—Jeff Rowe/AP

WEEKEND: TELEVISION & DVD

NEW ON DVD

“Hustlers”: In this almost-modern-day “Robin Hood” meets “Goodfellas,” based on Jessica Pressler’s New York magazine article with the same name and directed and written by Lorene Scafaria, “Hustlers” follows Destiny (Constance Wu), a stripper struggling to make ends meet. After Ramona (Jennifer Lopez) takes Destiny under her wing and shows her how to succeed at the club, the 2008 financial crisis overwhelms the industry, and the women concoct a bold new plan for making money: running up seedy Wall Street men’s credit cards, confident they wouldn’t call the strip club back to dispute the charges.

“Scafaria plants her film in a specific pantheon and signals what we’re in for with this sprawling crime epic of questionable narrators, unbelievable amounts of cash, and the charismatic criminals who enjoy the spoils of their unique labor,” wrote Tribune News Service critic Katie Walsh in her review.

Pretty much everything about this movie is perfect, but especially... Lo attempting wealth redistribution, J. Lo smoking and lounging on a rooftop, J. Lo celebrating Christmas, all the angst-filled classical piano juxtaposed against dazzling early-2000s nostalgia, and I did mention J. Lo?

“It Chapter Two”: The “It” reboot may have only come out two years ago, but this sequel takes a big leap forward, revisiting the Losers Club 27 years after the last time Pennywise the Clown had terrorized the town of Derry, Maine. Only Mike (Isaiah Mustafa) is still in Derry, and he summons the group back from heinous crimes and Pennywise’s balloons being resurfacing in the town, to uphold the blood oath they made as kids.

Its bloated run time makes it suffer, wrote Los Angeles Times critic Jen Yamato in her review, but the script is effective when its characters’ emotions resonate.

“It Chapter Two” loses sight of the forest for the trees, even with Benjamin Wallfisch’s portentous score signaling the way,” Yamato wrote. “A particularly unwieldy and overstuffed third act lacks the elegance and clarity that Muschietti builds into his best individual sequences.”

Also new on DVD:

“Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood”: In director Quentin Tarantino’s ninth film, a TV actor (Leonardo DiCaprio) and his stable (Brad Pitt) struggle to find meaningful work in Los Angeles during the summer of 1969.

“Monos”: A group of young soldiers on a remote Latin American mountain watch over an American hostage while chaos strikes in Spanish/English.

“Freaky”: A 7-year-old girl (Lexy Kolker) escapes her paranoid father’s (Emile Hirsch) locked house and discovers a strange new world.

“Badland”: A detective (Kevin Makely) is hired to catch a Confederate war criminal in this Western directed by Justin Lee. — Katie Foran-McHale/TNS

The new Netflix series “Heartstrings” features episodes inspired by songs from Dolly Parton, who is an executive producer on the show.

TINA ROWEN/Netflix



Tugging at fans’ heartstrings

After more than 50 years, the Dollyverse is still going strong

By JANE BORDEN
Special to The Washington Post

“The Dollyverse is this idea that you can see every story through her,” says Jd Abumrad, Radiolab co-host and creator of the new podcast “Dolly Parton’s America.” While investigating the 73-year-old country music legend, he explores murder-ballad history, banjo origins and his father’s childhood home in Lebanon, Tenn. In this last pursuit, Abumrad becomes like every Parton fan. He develops a profoundly personal connection with her work.

Over a music and screen career spanning more than 50 years, Parton has attracted a diverse fan base that’s equal parts Christian conservative and LGBTQ+, and touches every generation from traditionalists to Zs. They all hear their lives in her songs; we see every story through hers. And we have more opportunities to do so now than ever.

Netflix streams Parton’s new anthology series, “Heartstrings,” as of late November; “Christmas at Dollywood” premieres on the Hallmark Channel on Dec. 8; she co-hosted the Country Music Association Awards on Nov. 13; NBC aired “Dolly Parton: 50 Years at the Grand Ole Opry” on Nov. 26; and Abumrad’s podcast, co-produced with OSM Audio and WNYC Studios, launched Oct. 15. Plus, her Tennessee theme park, Dollywood, opened a \$37 million expansion this year and she announced plans for a lifestyle brand.

Welcome to the Dollyverse.

“It blows me away that we’re not all celebrating her as a songwriter as much as we do, say, Bob Dylan,” Abumrad says in a phone interview. “From 1967 to 1973, she’s walking down the hall and No. 1 songs are falling out of her head.”

Parton has made 44 Top 10 country albums, and 25 No. 1 hits on the Billboard Country charts. In 1973, she wrote “Jolene” and “I Will Always Love You” on the same night.

Television has always been intrinsic to the singer-songwriter’s success. A seven-year stint on “The Porter Wagoner Show” launched her career in 1967. In the aughts, her appearances as Aunt Dolly on Disney Channel’s hit “Hannah Montana” introduced her to younger fans. “My 17-year-old knows every word to ‘Jolene,’” says Michelle Vicary, an executive vice president at Hallmark’s parent company, Crown Media.

Now, Parton is mining her songs for narrative content. “Heartstrings,” a Netflix series on which she is also an executive producer, comprises eight hour-long features inspired by and named after the artist’s tracks. She introduces each episode and appears in some. At the beginning of “These Old Bones,” starring Ginnifer Goodwin and Kathleen Turner, Parton speaks about growing up without a TV, saying, “Writing songs was like making my own little movies with my guitar.”

And while her musical canon contains the popular tropes — thrillers, Westerns, romances, family fare — you won’t see every hit song on “Heartstrings.” The project’s showrunner, Patrick Sean Smith, says Parton wanted to save “I Will Always Love You” and “Here You Come Again” for a second season. She also suggested they add a line to the “Jolene” episode that teases a sequel. “I was like, ‘Yes, and I feel like an idiot for not thinking of that myself,’” Smith recalls, “but I can’t think like Dolly Parton, and I accept that.”

The country singer is familiar with the process of adapting her music into other projects. In 2015, Parton and NBC turned her 1971 smash hit into the TV movie “Dolly Parton’s Coat of Many Colors.” It broke records for NBC with 13.1 million viewers, and a Christmas-themed sequel followed in 2016. Talks to adapt “Jolene” bounced around Hollywood before morphing into the current Netflix series.

“She is egotless. I never even got a hint of it,” Smith says of Parton’s approach to the work. “I asked if the narrator (in the song)

keeps telling Jolene she’s beautiful as a way to manipulate her. And Dolly was like, ‘No.’ I asked, ‘There’s not a power dynamic when she says, ‘Oh you can have any man?’ And Dolly was just like, ‘No, that’s not in there.’” What remains in the narrator is unadulterated vulnerability.

This kind of authenticity enables Parton’s world to live in different media and feel the same, and is of course what endears her to a legion of fans. “Her songs are inclusive while being personal at the same time,” Smith explains.

This is one of what Abumrad describes as “an absolute smorgasbord of contradictions that are somehow cohesive.” She connects to people with opposing belief systems, yet none believe she chose a side. As a result, he adds, “Nobody dislikes Dolly.”

In his podcast, Abumrad mentions her Q Score, a measurement of a celebrity or brand’s public appeal. “She is in the top 10 globally in terms of everybody’s favorites. But she’s almost No. 1 when it comes to lack of negatives,” he reports. An episode titled “Dolitics” considers her ability to star in and write the anthem for the 1980 film “9 to 5” (basically a feminist call to arms) alongside Jane Fonda (still despised at the time as “Hanoi Jane” for Vietnam War activism) and remain apolitical.

“She’s able to tap dance around political decisions in a way that is extremely shrewd,” Abumrad says. “Part of it is super real. There is something deliberately spiritual about it — the fact that she will never say an unkind word about anyone, even Porter Wagoner,” who tried to keep Parton from leaving his show in 1974 to pursue her solo career, eventually suing her.

In one of Abumrad’s interviews with Parton, she says of Wagoner, “He didn’t know how many dreams I had.” That means “he forgives Wagoner and forgives her own ambition simultaneously,” Abumrad explains. This sort of radical forgiveness has led many of her fans to worship her as Saint Dolly.

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

BY STEVEN PETROW

Special to The Washington Post

You can become a kinder person. Even in this angry, stressed-out era. Yes, really. Many organizations are focused on doing just that. Take Bridge the Divide, which facilitates “respectful face-to-face” conversations among millennials, and one of my favorites, Better Angels, a nonprofit group seeking to break down the barriers “among people of every political persuasion and ideology.” Among the warriors for civility — aka kindness — is Jamil Zaki, 39, a Stanford University psychology professor whose lifework is focused on helping us become our better selves. For the past three years, he has been developing the tools to foster what he calls a “kindness revolution.” I know that’s an oxymoron — revolutions are most associated with overthrowing despots and are often very unkind. But this is a different kind of insurrection, and he begins with a startling premise: Empathy is not unalterable. It can be cultivated, or tampered down.

Some may remember these lyrics from “South Pacific”: “You’ve got to be taught to hate and fear.” Well, in that same vein, Zaki’s research shows that you can cultivate kindness and empathy. Or that we can be taught to love and care.

Much of his work has taken place on the Stanford campus, where he leads a class called “Becoming Kinder.” It is designed to address the crisis of empathy and help people fight back against the increasing trend of polarization and disconnection. We have all seen evidence of it across the political divide, and among all age groups, but Zaki finds it especially notable among college students.

Zaki also wrote a new book titled “The War for Kindness: Building Empathy in a Fractured World.” “In the three years I spent writing (my book),” Zaki said, “I discovered more and more evidence that empathy is indeed a skill that we can build, and that doing so is a crucial project for us, both as individuals and as a culture. ... I wanted to put the book’s principles into practice.”

Frankly, I’ve always thought that empathy is hard-wired, so I was skeptical. To riff off Lady Gaga, you’re born that way — or not, Zaki said it’s only partially true. “There’s absolutely a genetic component to empathy and kindness,” he said. “When we hear something is genetic we immediately go to the idea that it’s 100 percent hard-wired — that there’s nothing you can do to shift where you are on the spectrum.” But his research has shown “there’s lots of evidence that our experi-

ences, our choices, our habits, our practices go a long way to predict how empathetic we become.”

So we can rewire our brains to become more empathetic.

Zaki says the more someone practices kindness toward others, the more likely they are to build long-term empathy.

So how does one practice kindness? Zaki offers five “kindness challenges” (found on his web page). “True to their name, these exercises are meant to stretch us beyond our comfort zone: first recognizing, then bypassing our instincts to empathize only with friends, family and people who look or think like us,” he says in a video on the site.

Or if you happen to be a Stanford undergrad, you could take his class. That is what then-first-year student Natalie Stiner did last winter.

Stiner and her 15 classmates completed a lot of reading about “what it meant to be kind, what empathy was, how empathy worked.” But, for the Michigan native, the best parts of the class were the kindness challenges, with the first being her favorite because it required examining a personal failure.

She chose to work on her relationship with her older sister Sarah after yelling at her for no good reason.

“That was a failure of mine,” she says. “I wasn’t kind in this moment.”

This small act of self-reflection became her focus during the weeklong challenge. Suddenly, Stiner had an “aha” moment: “I was kinder to strangers than to my friends (and family).” With this awareness, she “tried to acknowledge when they were kind to me, when they were doing things for me that I wasn’t appreciating enough.”

“The improvements (in my interactions) I made were so huge,” she said. “I think that empathy is something that can definitely be worked on and improved at all points in your life, even through adulthood and on.”

This is Zaki’s point: “We can grow our empathy if we want. Our emotions are not animalistic impulses.”

Julio Ballista, a Stanford sophomore this year, saw the course’s relevance to the challenging times in which we live.

“I feel like there’s a lot of contention between different (political) parties; different people,” he said. “If I could find ways to become kinder myself, then I could give that to a bunch of other people who may also need it.”

This notion is what Zaki describes as contagion and is a core part of his understanding of kindness and empathy.

“An individual’s kindness can nonetheless trigger people to spread positivity in other ways,” he explained. “There’s really something in it for individuals by practicing it. (Research suggests) empathetic people are going to finish first, they’re going to be happier and they’re going to have greater professional success.”

Perhaps one of the toughest of Zaki’s challenges is learning how to “disagree better.” As he explained, it’s crucial “to move beyond the first pass assessment of what someone believes and why we hate what they believe and into a deeper exploration of that (person) as an individual, as a human being.”

In this challenge, he tells his students to find someone they disagree with and “assert those disagreements but instead of debating the point or sniping at each other, try and ask them to cultivate curiosity about how they came to have that opinion in the first place.”

Zaki said he hopes people will begin to practice “empathetic habits,” including making contact with people who are different from ourselves.

“I mean making one-on-one individualized contact with a diverse group of (people),” he emphasized. With the holidays upon us, there’s no better time than now to take the professor’s advice.

Nice work

In this angry, stressed-out time, research says that we can learn to be kinder people



WEEKEND: FAMILY

Gather around the table

Reap the benefits of family meals with these tips

By CARA ROSENBLOOM

Special to The Washington Post

As a dietitian, I often field concerns from parents who struggle to make time for family meals. Parents know shared meals are beneficial for kids and are linked to improved nutrition and better grades. But family meals can be difficult to schedule during time-crunched days when we're balancing work, school, kids' lessons and an empty fridge. Many flustered folks end up ordering a pizza and feeling guilty about letting their family down. As a working mom, I fall into the same trap.

This pattern is cruelly and gratuitously deflating for busy parents who are trying their best. I spoke to some researchers to find out what aspects of family meals parents should focus on to reap the most benefit—even when there's little time. I learned that how family members eat together is even more important than how often they eat together. Your kids can benefit from family meals if you keep the following seven research-backed points in mind.

Every meal together counts

It's fine if you can't share family meals. Justica Berge, a professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health at the University of Minnesota Medical School, found that most American families across many cultures eat together three times per week on average. "My study population is highly diverse, with African American, Native American, Hispanic, immigrant/refugee groups and white families," she says.

Her research showed that sharing just two family meals a week is also enough to reap benefits for children, such as a healthy dietary intake, fewer disordered eating behaviors, greater family connectedness, higher academic success, lower risk of substance abuse and better communication skills.

Researchers Matteo Dallacker, Jutta Mata and Ralph Hertwig from the Max Planck Institute for Human Development and the University of Mannheim, both in Germany, recently co-wrote a meta-analysis on the components of healthy family meals. They found that there is no magic number in regard to how often family meals must take place to be beneficial. "Even one family meal per week can have beneficial effects," they say. "They are likely to be smaller effects than if family meals occur more often—but small effects can add up over time." So do what you can and discard the guilt.

Two people are enough for a family meal

It's not always possible to get the entire family together when everyone is busy, but Dallacker's team says that as long as there are two family members eating together, it counts as a family meal



iStock

Family meals are linked to better nutrition and improved academic function. Even just one meal a week has been shown to have benefits.

and can provide benefits. They also found that family meals can take place everywhere—at home, in a restaurant and even in the kitchen of a parent's employer.

Breakfast and lunch work, too

Research shows that breakfast and lunch are also opportune times for family meals; parents can model the same healthy skills at any daily repeat. That opens up 21 opportunities each week instead of just seven dinners, and it really takes the pressure off. Maybe your schedule is better suited to one family dinner per week, plus a weekday breakfast and brunch on Sunday. Whatever works!

Meals don't have to be ultra-healthy

While nutritious and balanced meals are always the gold standard when parents are trying to model healthy eating, any meal counts—even one that takes just minutes to make. "My research has shown that family meals are more doable than people think," Berge says. "If families have a mix of fresh food and pre-prepared food—perhaps a fresh salad with a frozen pizza—we have found that to be good enough with regard to health benefits compared to a meal made from scratch."

It's great to prepare together

Kids gain essential life skills from being part of the process, which can include grocery shopping, food prep, cooking, setting the table and cleaning up. Studies conducted by Dallacker's team show that children eat more healthily when they are involved in preparing the shared food.

Keep things positive

Family meals are not the right

time for arguments. Ideally, shared meals should be used as a time to catch up and enjoy one another's company.

"We found that a positive mealtime atmosphere is associated with healthier eating in children," Dallacker's team says. They explain that positive family meals provide structure and a supportive emotional climate, which promotes family cohesion and health in all family members—not only the children. "Research on family meals identified benefits that go beyond nutritional health, such as a lower risk of depression, higher self-esteem and greater sense of resilience," the researchers say.

Turn off the TV

There are many benefits from the behavioral components of family meals. Turning the TV off, carving out mealtime and enjoying shared company are all big wins. "Eating in the living room while watching TV makes unhealthy eating behavior more likely," Dallacker's team says. Their recent meta-analysis showed that turning off the TV was significantly associated with better nutritional health and improving the family bond. You can eat together every night of the week, but if the TV is on and no one is communicating, it has less value.

My kids have lessons on Sundays, Mondays and Wednesdays, so those meals are an ever-changing kaleidoscope of people and ingredients. Some are family meals, and some just can't be—and I'm finally OK with that. Taco Tuesday is when my kids help me cook, and Friday is dinner with Grandpa. And on Saturdays, we order in together. Our family dinners don't always match the ideal that's been pushed on parents, but I've realized that how we eat together—the TV is off, phone are banned and communication is open—is more important than how often.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



The positive side to a shorter holiday season

Ever since I realized that we have one less week between Thanksgiving and Christmas this year, I've been moping around feeling ripped off. We can't be expected to cram every holiday celebration and tradition into three lousy weeks! There is far too much to do, see, eat, sing, drink and buy before December 25!

In 1789, George Washington declared Nov. 26 a National Day of Thanksgiving, but then in 1863 Abraham Lincoln declared it to be the last Thursday of the month. To complicate things further, Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a bill in 1941 placing Thanksgiving on the fourth Thursday. The aftermath of this waffling is that, when Thanksgiving falls on November 28th like it did this year, we get cheated out of a week of holiday celebrating. Obviously, these men's wives had no say in the matter, because this most unfortunate Gregorian anomaly has clearly ruined the 2019 holiday season.

However, being that I'm a nog-is-half-full kind of gal, I wonder if a pivot in attitude might turn this bamboozle into a bailout? Have we been swindled, or have we been saved? Is losing a week actually a win?

Clearly, there are definite cons to a shortened holiday. After exhausting ourselves by lugging boxes of decorations out of the attic, garage and basement and spending countless hours bedazzling the house, the yard and the tree—who wants to turn around and have to put it all back a few short weeks later? However, having the Christmas tree up for one less week might actually be a good thing. Think about it—one less week of having to crawl under the tree to check the scummy, stagnant cesspool in the stand's reservoir. Less opportunity for the cat to upchuck ingested trim. Less time for the tree to die, dry up and drop its needles on the carpet. Less chance the whole shebang will catch fire and burn the entire house down.

See how a little attitude adjustment can work in one's favor?

Sure, it really stinks to be short-changed a whole week's worth of the Christmas music you love. But your ears will thank you for sparing them a few broadcasts of the Chimpunks' gratingly nasal rendition of "Christmas Don't Be Late." You won't have to worry as much about getting Jose Feliciano's "Feliz Navidad" stuck on an unending loop in your head. And there is less chance that your rage disorder will be triggered when you hear the sound of Harry Connick Jr.'s voice for the umpteenth time.

Of course, everyone wants a full month to savor the traditional holiday foods that we get only once a year—the cookies, the latkes, the prime rib, the cheese balls, the cranberries, the cocktails, the shrimp platters, the Swedish meatballs and the red and green peanut M&M's! But let's face it, a shorter holiday season means a 25 percent reduction in calories, which translates into fewer pounds gained, and less time on the treadmill resolving to sweat it off after New Year's. Yay!

Of course, a holiday season bilked of shopping days could ratchet up the gift-buying stress to panic levels. But shoppers like me who end up buying things for themselves—new boots, makeup, handbags, sweaters—while looking for gifts for others could use a healthy dose of anxiety to keep them focused on the task at hand.

And finally, it sucks that we're getting gypped out of six days' worth of festive gatherings, traditional celebrations and holiday parties. Think of all the Secret Santa presents, cookie swaps, command events and cocktail soirees we will miss! However, less time partying means less time wearing Spanx, less idle chitchat, less opportunity to dribble chocolate fondue down your shirt and less chance of regretting the inappropriate biker chick joke you told your boss.

Behold the power of positive thinking!

Oh, and by the way, due to circumstances beyond my control, my Christmas cards will be late this year. (I'm liking this abbreviated holiday season more and more.)

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com
Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

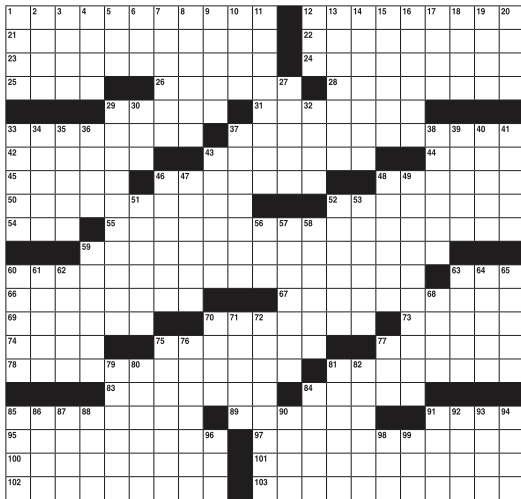
OPEN WIDE!

BY FRANK LONGO / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Frank Longo, of Hoboken, N.J., is a professional puzzlemaker and editor. He creates the weekly "Premier Crossword" for King Features Syndicate, as well as the Sunday "Spelling Bee" for this magazine. He is the author of more than 150 books of Sudoku puzzles.

Today's crossword is unthemed, which means the focus is on vocabulary that is as lively and colorful as possible, with no other constraint. To construct it, Frank started with the central Across square, then built outward. The finished puzzle has 122 answers, the lowest number ever for a Sunday Times crossword. —W.S.

- ACROSS**
1 Bondsman, of late?
12 Unfold
21 It has some miles on it
22 Not yet in the database
23 A.P. courses, e.g.
24 Summer-camp activity
25 Emily Dickinson's "I heard _____ buzz — when I died"
26 Wonder-working biblical prophet
28 Creator of Mike Hammer
29 Cross
31 In the mood for love
33 Main theme of "Othello"
37 Climax of "The Shawshank Redemption"
42 Picnic, e.g.
43 Bumping, as cigarettes
44 Rotting evidence
45 Clicking counters
46 Lacking
48 Imprint permanently
50 Means of communication without interference
52 Insulation and sealing material
- DOWN**
54 Thrice due
55 Not generics
59 Went glassing
60 Hit 1997 film condemned by the Chinese government
63 Fixture in a chocolate factory
66 Least normal
67 Like some arts
69 James who starred in 1970s TV's "How the West Was Won"
70 Name originally proposed (but not adopted) for Utah
73 Paint a false picture of
74 Weightstation lineup
75 Fuel-carrying ships
77 Event that usually has gate crashers?
78 Methods of studying pooled data
81 Peak in 1980 headlines
83 Representation of the real world in literature and art
84 NASA's spacecraft Dawn began orbiting it in 2015
85 Closures sometimes put them on
89 List-ending phrase
91 Big to-do
95 Given a heads-up about
97 Subscription service with an arrow in its logo
100 Free
- DOWN**
1 Nobleman above un conte
2 From
3 Dickens orphan
4 One way to stand by
5 Anticipatory time
6 Certain Thanksgiving turkey serving
7 "Nice and rosy" things in the song "Sleigh Ride"
8 Founder of New York's Odditorium in 1939
9 Like burning rubber
10 Les Aléoutiennes, e.g.
11 House minority leader before Pelosi (1995-2003)
12 Half of a reproach
13 Sitcom/film star who was named People's "Most Beautiful Woman" twice
14 Staying fresh
15 Chicory variety
16 Topics for fashion magazines
17 Elevator near an arch?
- DOWN**
18 Something that can be performed da capo
19 Campus abutting Drexel, informally
20 Beat by a whisker
27 Pal
29 What all NaCl molecules have
30 Persian, e.g.
32 "Yeah, right!"
33 Steinbeck family
34 Blake who composed "I'm Just Wild About Harry"
35 Early employer of Steve Jobs
36 Head residents?
37 Many T-ball coaches
38 Spherical bacterium
39 Not regularly standing
40 Something to drive home
41 Cousins of kites
43 Bird on California's state quarter
46 Satisfies
47 Suggest
48 Running mate?
49 Standard features of almanacs
51 Department capital SE of Paris
52 Get married, in slang
53 2004 sci-fi thriller inspired by a classic 1950 book
56 Bigeye, on some menus
57 Some sewers
58 Wine components



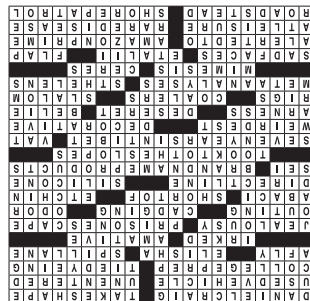
- ACROSS**
59 Mother _____
60 Buzzy body?
61 Like some coincidences
62 French for "twenty"
63 End of many town names
64 Bar _____
65 Is thick (with)
68 Shade akin to turquoise
70 Word after old or dog
71 Longtime dairy aisle mascot
72 What a big sock might make you do
75 Reached maturity
76 Onetime Procter & Gamble product on Time magazine's list of "The 50 Worst Inventions"
77 "_____ Said," 2019 best seller on the #MeToo movement
79 Rare and valuable instruments
80 Like restaurants with three Michelin stars
- DOWN**
81 Usurper
82 Amplifier of radio signals
84 Mild, light-colored cigar
85 German industrial region
86 Dolly in "Hello, Dolly!"
87 Paris's Place _____
88 Neighbor of Lucy and Ricky on "I Love Lucy"
90 Nanny, in Nanjing
91 Lose sleep, so to speak
92 "Not true!"
93 Schoolyard retort
94 Spa offering
96 Publication whose first ed. took more than 70 years to complete
98 Beat by a whisker
99 "Don't text and drive" ad, e.g., in brief

GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and visit gunstonstreet.com.

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



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FACES



More Superman? Maybe. But first ...

Henry Cavill stars in Netflix fantasy series 'The Witcher'

By RYAN PEARSON
Associated Press

Henry Cavill is all-in on his Netflix fantasy series "The Witcher," but he says the "door hasn't closed" on a return as Superman in the DC cinematic universe.

Cavill last played the superhero in 2017's "Justice League," and it's unclear whether any upcoming movies will feature the character. There are several films based on DC superheroes in the works, including sequels to "Wonder Woman" and "Aquaman."

Cavill dons a long white wig to play monster hunter Geralt of Rivia in "The Witcher," an ambitious eight-episode adaptation of Polish author Andrzej Sapkowski's books. With intense magic, scheming political factions and epic battles, it's targeting the audiences that made "Game of Thrones" a worldwide phenomenon.

"I live in the fantasy genre anyway; that's my hobby. And so for me, it was always — it was always obvious. It was like yes, of course, these shows can be popular," Cavill said. "It was always a target. I always wanted to bring things like this to the screen in one way, shape or form."

The show premieres on Netflix on Dec. 20, and production begins early next year on a second season.

The series features Cavill's Geralt engaging in intricately choreographed swordplay, relaxing in a bath and talking to his horse — all recognizable moments for fans of the acclaimed hit 2015 role-playing game *The Witcher 3*.

Gabrielle Union, NBC discuss 'AGT' firing

Associated Press

Gabrielle Union and NBC both said Wednesday that they have had a "productive" first conversation on her firing from "America's Got Talent" and her allegations that she was removed over her complaints about racism and other troubling on-set behavior.

"We had a lengthy 5-hour, and what I thought to be, productive meeting yesterday," the actress said on Twitter. "I was able to, again, express my unfiltered truth. I led with transparency and my desire and hope for real change."

NBC said in a statement that the "initial conversation was candid and productive. While there will be a further investigation to get a deeper understanding of the facts, we are working with Gabrielle to come to a positive resolution."

Union, best known for films including "Bring It On" and "Bad Boys II," was a judge on the talent showcase, but she and Julianne Hough were not asked to return after their first season.

Variety subsequently reported that Union, who is black, believed she was fired because she had asked NBC and the show's producers to address an environment that tolerated racist jokes and remarks, including what she said were multiple notes from producers saying she was wearing her hair "too black."

Union had also complained of other behavior, such as smoking on the indoor set, Variety reported.

Other news

■ **Willie Nelson** may have given up smoking, but he hasn't stopped using marijuana. While in San Antonio last week for two performances, the 86-year-old country music legend told KSAT-TV that in an effort to take better care of himself, he no longer

smokes. Nelson, who owns a company that sells marijuana products, says: "I have abused my lungs quite a bit in the past, so breathing is a little more difficult these days and I have to be careful." His spokeswoman, Elaine Schock, told The Associated Press in an email Wednesday that Nelson hasn't given up cannabis, and she points out there are different ways to consume it.

■ A documentary on Taylor Swift will kickoff the next **Sundance Film Festival**, where new films including the Will Ferrell-Julia Louis Dreyfus remake of the Swedish film "Force Majeure" and Benh Zeitlin's long-awaited follow-up to "Beasts of the Southern Wild" are set to premiere. Programmers for the preeminent showcase for independent cinema, founded by Robert Redford and set annually in the mountains of Park City, Utah, announced most of its 118 feature-length film lineup for its 2020 edition on Wednesday. The coming Sundance will take place Jan. 23-Feb. 2.

■ A Los Angeles judge on Wednesday said **Chris Brown** must give up all rights to his former pet monkey, pay for its care and not try to buy a new one if he wants misdemeanor charges of illegal animal ownership dropped. Brown must permanently forfeit his rights to the monkey, named Piji, pay \$35,000 to the facility where it is now being housed, and refrain from trying to visit it without making special arrangements.

■ **D.C. Fontana**, a writer and story editor for the original "Star Trek" television series and later a contributor to "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and other related projects, has died at age 80. Fran Evans, a family friend, told The Associated Press that Fontana died Tuesday after a brief illness. Dorothy Catherine Fontana's credits included such episodes as "Journey to Babel" and "Friday's Child" and Leonard Nimoy would praise her for broadening the back story of Mr. Spock's Vulcan culture.

'Parasite' prepares to disrupt Oscars

By STEVEN ZEITCHIK
The Washington Post

This time of year, the thousands of people who vote on Hollywood awards like the Oscars receive piles of screeners. Studios send them out with the aim of attracting eyeballs — and, they hope, votes.

But there's one DVD that isn't in their pile. "Parasite," the Korean-language class thriller that has become a darling of both critics and audiences since coming out two months ago, is nowhere to be found.

The Washington Post has learned that the film's U.S. distributor, Neon, has decided to hold off on sending the movie until Christmas, an uncommonly late date for a film that has been out for months.

"It's very purposeful. Theaters, a communal setting — that's where we want voters to see this movie," said Tom Quinn, Neon's co-founder. Executives hope that higher-quality viewing at voter screenings is worth the loss in wide exposure — a notable gamble.

Then again, "Parasite" has been beating the odds for a while. The film about a Seoul grifter family that ingratiate itself into a wealthy household has disrupted the industry — it's a non-Indie hit in 2019. That it's in a foreign language only magnifies the feat.

But "Parasite's" key trick may be yet to come: It could be the first foreign-language movie in the 91-year history of the Academy Awards to win best picture.

"If 'Parasite' is able to win, it would completely upend the expectations of what a best picture is," said Dave Karger, a host on TCM and a veteran Oscar analyst.

A victory, he and others note, would suggest a landmark moment for a business that has become more global — suggesting Hollywood, in at least some ways, is as eager to import the work of other countries as it is to export to them.

It would also likely prompt grumbling from some observers and rivals that Oscar voters are out of touch with mass tastes.

Like many experts, Karger said "Parasite" is a long shot to win Hollywood's top prize. But the very fact that it is considered a lock to land a nomination when nominees are announced next month is itself a feat. Only 11 foreign-language movies have ever been nominated for best picture, an average of about one per decade.

The winner of the top prize at the Cannes Film Festival last May, Bong Joon-Ho's movie seemed destined for a niche theatrical rollout in the U.S. in October. Any real discovery would follow later on streaming platforms. (Neon has a deal with Netflix.)

But the South Korean production soon began bucking the odds. Even before its U.S. theatrical release, "Parasite" generated a huge amount of social-media traffic, particularly among young people who don't form a core part of the foreign-language audience. Soon, runs in Los Angeles and New York were sold out. Other cities followed.

As of this week, the movie has reached \$18 million in U.S. box office — double that of any other foreign-language movie this year. Forecasts put the ultimate total at \$25 million or higher, a very large sum. Foreign-language movies from other countries that gross more than \$25 million in the U.S. are very rare, particularly if they're not in Spanish.

According to the awards website Gold Derby, which devises a forecasting model based on expert polls, "Parasite" has the fifth-best chance of all 2019 movies to win best picture, with odds of 10 percent. It sits just three percentage points behind the leader, director Martin Scorsese's "The Irishman."

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Ernie Gates

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Stars and Stripes (USPS 0417900) is published weekdays (except Dec. 25 and Jan. 1) for 50 cents Monday through Thursday and on Friday by Pacific Stars and Stripes, Unit #50002, APO AF 96301-5002. Periodicals postage paid at San Francisco, CA. Postmaster: Send address changes to Pacific Stars and Stripes, Unit #5002, APO AF 96301-5002.

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OPINION

Why do so many believe Trump will win?

By STUART ROTHENBERG
CQ Roll Call

I often hear people predicting President Donald Trump's reelection. Some are conservatives and Trump supporters who echo the president's unflinching optimism. But others are Democrats who can't resist embracing a gloom-and-doom scenario.

I usually ask those people why they think Trump will win a second term. They sometimes mention Russia or the makeup of the Democratic field in the economy. Often, they point out that Trump's base remains solid and that angry white men will carry him to a second term.

I understand those views, but I was trained as a political scientist to look at the empirical evidence, not my hopes or fears. The problem, of course, is knowing exactly which empirical evidence is predictive and which could be misleading.

In 2016, many of us looked at the wrong evidence — national public opinion polls that accurately found Hillary Clinton winning by at least a couple of points (she won by 2.1 percentage points, but we ignored the states, figuring that a 2-point victory would automatically translate into an Electoral College win as well).

It wasn't an unreasonable assumption, considering that Al Gore won the popular vote by just over 500,000 votes in 2000 but lost the Electoral College by a few hundred Florida casts.

Clinton won the popular vote by just under 3 million votes, a far more substantial popular vote victory than Gore had, yet she lost more crucial states than Gore did.

Lesson learned. The focus this cycle is much more on the Electoral College and the key states that add up to 270 electoral votes. We now have plenty of data to help us examine the president's reelection prospects. But do the Democrats have anyone who can take advantage of Trump's political problems?

As everyone knows, the Democratic field is a mess. All the hopefuls have serious blemishes or huge question marks about their appeal. Sens. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren seem dug in too far on the left, while former Vice President

Joe Biden doesn't show the sharpness and agility that Democrats are looking for. South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg is a terrific speaker, but he's young, and no-body is sure whether minority voters will ever get excited about his candidacy. Sen. Cory Booker hasn't gotten traction so far, and while Sen. Amy Klobuchar is well-positioned for a general election, it's hard to see her breaking out from the pack.

There are others, of course, including Michael Bloomberg, but all have a very long way to go to win the Democratic nomination.

But Democrats who whine about the field and its uncertain fate against Trump ought to remember that most fields seeking to challenge a sitting president look unimpressive.

The contenders invariably look too old or too young. They're mediocre speakers or political lightweight without the necessary experience. They lack charisma or carry personal or political baggage. Or they have bragged about grabbing women in their private places.

None of these hopefuls could win — but, of course, so did Trump.

The party's eventual nominee will answer some questions simply by winning the nomination. And the general election campaign will likely answer the rest.

But even with the Democrats' problems, polling doesn't offer many reasons to believe that Trump's second term or that his electoral fate is sealed. Virtually all the reputable national polls show the president is in serious trouble, and I'm not just referring to his job approval numbers in the low-to-mid 40s.

Apart from Emerson College polls showing a virtual tie between Trump and Warren, most national surveys show Warren leading the president by 5 to 8 points.

Those same polls show Biden leading Trump by 10 to 12 points.

Even Sanders, who is outside the political mainstream, leads Trump by 6 to 9 points in most surveys (again, excluding Emerson, which always seems to be an outlier).

There are a few polls showing trial heats of Trump-Buttigieg, but the few reputable surveys suggest anything from an even race to Buttigieg up by a half-dozen

points.

Of course, we all have discounted national polls because of what happened three years ago. But if the Democratic nominee wins not by 2 points but by 6 or 8, it would be difficult for Trump to win at least 270 electoral votes.

Democratic nervousness seems to stem primarily from a handful of polls in a few crucial states, including the three key Great Lakes states that Clinton lost: Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. (They want to ignore Arizona and Florida, two interesting states that offer Democrats serious opportunities next year.)

There are relatively few highly regarded polls in these and other swing states, and that undoubtedly has added to Democratic anxiety. So has a series of New York Times/Siena College polls showing close races for various challengers to Trump.

But again, we are talking about a handful of polls in states that are not early in the nominating process. In other words, states where swing voters have not really focused on the candidates.

The state polls show mixed results, some showing Trump ahead and others suggesting that Biden, at least, has a narrow but clear general election advantage.

For now, there is simply no empirical reason to believe that Trump will win next year. In fact, the evidence is not compelling in either direction. A strong Democratic turnout, including votes from people who voted third party the last time or skipped the presidential race entirely, would put the president in a substantial electoral hole.

On the other hand, poor minority turnout would create a challenging environment for the eventual Democratic nominee.

For the moment, all we can safely say is that polls continue to confirm that Trump is in deep trouble, with a job approval rating that no incumbent president seeking reelection would want. So regardless of whether you support the president or oppose him, put aside your hopes, dreams and phobias for at least another few months, when we may have a better handle on the Democratic race and the general election.

Collaborations help serve military community

By KEN FISHER AND SHAUN SMITH
Special to Stars and Stripes

There are many ways to say "thank you" to our nation's heroes not just on Veterans Day, but every day of the year. At Thanksgiving, I was reminded again how blessed we are because of our military families.

Today, our nation's military community is made up of more than 18 million veterans and 1.4 million active duty service members. In addition, 27 million military family members have dedicated their lives to serving our country by standing behind their loved ones (Department of Defense).

For many military members and their families, as they are returning from overseas or leaving service, their battle is only just beginning. Often, a number of challenges can arise, from physical and unseen wounds to the struggle to integrate back into civilian life. For those who need specialized care for wounds, injuries or illnesses, the major challenge can be treatment and recovery assigned at a facility far from their home and family.

We saw this firsthand with the Curry family. When Anson Curry was wounded with a traumatic brain injury while serving in Afghanistan in 2011, he spent more than nine months recovering at the Palo Alto VA hospital in Northern California.

His wife, Minnie, and his brother had to travel more than 1,700 miles from their home in San Antonio in order to remain by his bedside throughout his long journey to recovery.

We believe families like the Currys, who have given so much, should be embraced with a network of support. Zachary Fisher saw the need for housing and travel support for military families and decided to create Fisher House Foundation, a nonprofit best known for a network of 86 homes where families can stay near a VA facility at no cost while their loved one receives treatment. Since 1990, we've saved military families more than \$451 million in lodging and travel costs.

Other organizations have also made a difference in the lives of those who serve. Organizations like Hire Heroes USA, Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation and Operation Homefront have each identified ways to serve and offer support through job training, scholarship opportunities and more.

Despite their work, these organizations cannot do it alone. By supporting our service members, veterans and their families, businesses have the unique opportunity to improve the lives of individuals and communities around them. This can be done through a variety of ways, such as job creation for veterans, as well as leveraging a

corporation's assets to further support in creative ways.

This year, Suave took a particularly creative approach to supporting the service member community while going above and beyond its donation of \$1 million to Fisher House Foundation. The brand — with thousands of supporters — took action on Twitter to #GiveTheExtraMile and contributed 2 million miles to Fisher House's Hero Miles program, covering necessary airfare for service members and their families.

Although Zachary Fisher never wore the uniform, he felt he had to give back to our military community. As a skilled builder and developer, he did just that the only way he knew how — through construction. By leveraging their own unique strengths, each and every business can have their own role to play in supporting our nation's heroes.

The key to thanking our service members will come from strategic cross-sector collaborations that identify and create the solutions that will help make a difference for our service members and veterans, and the brave men and women who stand behind them.

Ken Fisher, managing partner at Fisher Brothers, is chairman and CEO of Fisher House Foundation. Shaun Smith is a senior brand manager at Suave.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other stateside syndicates.

Even Rep. Hunter's guilty plea comes with self-serving words

Los Angeles Times
When Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., revealed during a TV interview Monday that after months of proclaiming his innocence, he was now planning to plead guilty (he did Tuesday) in federal court to misusing campaign funds to pay for personal expenses, he said he was sorry.

Sort of. He also said he was sorry for violating the trust of voters in his north-eastern San Diego County district over and over again by using hundreds of thousands of dollars of political donations to pay for obviously non-campaign expenses such as family vacations, clothes and romantic outings with women other than his wife. He did not apologize for lying to federal elections officials or for lying to the public after the charges were filed in August 2018. Nor did he say he was sorry for trying to blame everybody but himself, including his wife and young son.

Rep. Hunter expressed remorse for making "mistakes," saying he would plead guilty to "only one count."

"I think it's important that people know that I did make mistakes. I did not properly monitor or account for my campaign money," Hunter told KUSI.

Rep. Hunter couldn't take full responsibility for his disgraceful actions. The fact is that the one count to which he pled guilty was that he knowingly and willfully tapped his campaign funds over and over and over again to pay for personal expenses for his family and himself.

Maybe a pretty big "mistake": thinking that he could siphon off a quarter of a million dollars in campaign funds to pay for things such as dental work, hotel rooms for a mistress, plane fare for his mother-in-law's trip to Poland and private-school tuition for his kids—and that that no one would mind. And maybe no one would have if it not for the dogged reporting of the San Diego Union-Tribune newspaper, work that Hunter has disparagingly referred to as "fake news."

It was bad enough that Hunter continued to deny the violations and smear the newspaper even after his wife, Margaret, pleaded guilty for her part earlier this year (and, notably, did take full responsibility for her actions). But he cynically exploited the already raw political divide in this country in a desperate attempt to deflect attention and blame. Mimicking President Donald Trump, he said the investigation was nothing more than a "politics-by-hunt" conducted by Hillary Clinton-loving prosecutors. And even while Hunter was lining up scapegoats to blame, his lawyers were going to ridiculous lengths to argue in court that it was perfectly reasonable for him to use campaign funds for romantic outings. By 2017, the latest year for which "mixing business with pleasure" served a political purpose. And they could afford to throw out such outlandish theories because Hunter used his campaign funds to pay attorney fees.

Hunter faces up to five years in prison. He has resigned yet, but is expected to be further sentenced in March. That's not soon enough. Hunter should have resigned the minute he admitted violating the public's trust. If he doesn't resign from Congress by the end of this week, the House should expel him. No one who diverts campaign funds into his own pockets should be allowed to remain in public office.



California Republican Rep. Duncan Hunter leaves federal court Tuesday in San Diego, after pleading guilty to misusing his campaign funds.

GREGORY BULL/AP

Pelosi's climate change theatrics as weak as accord

The Wall Street Journal

President Donald Trump didn't get off to Madrid for this week's United Nations climate-katich, but Nancy Pelosi brought a congressional delegation — and a message. "By coming here," she proclaimed at a news conference, "we want to say to everyone: We're still in. The United States is still in."

A month ago the Trump administration gave the U.N. its formal notice to withdraw from the Paris climate accord. Now Pelosi is saying that ... we'll always have Paris? The House speaker is third in the presidential line of succession. Pelosi would have to impeach and remove both Trump and Vice President Mike Pence before she got the power to commit — or recommit — the U.S. to international agreements.

As a reminder, the Paris deal from the start was impotent, little more than a pep rally for bien-pensants. Countries submitted voluntary pledges to cut emissions, but without having any realistic plans in place to get there. Not that it mattered, since the accord included no enforcement mechanism.

China, which pumps out more CO2 than the U.S. and European Union combined, agreed that its emissions would peak in 2030. Even that target now is in doubt, as Beijing expands coal-fired electricity. Today China has 148 gigawatts of coal power generation "either under active construction or under suspension and likely to be revived," according to a report last month from the nonprofit Global Energy Monitor. That is "nearly equal to the existing coal power capacity of the European Union (150 GW)."

The U.S. is moving away from coal, thanks to inexpensive natural gas from shale. CO2 emissions from burning fossil fuels for electricity peaked in 2007, per data from the Environmental Protection Agency. By 2017, the latest year in the EPA's data, emissions had dropped about 28% and were 5% lower than in 1990. Overall U.S. emissions of CO2 fell about 14% in a decade, yet the leading Democratic presidential contenders want to ban shale drilling for natural gas.

The problem that Pelosi and other Democrats have on climate is with American voters. They can't persuade enough of them that the cost of the solutions they're proposing — carbon taxes, regulations that would eliminate fossil fuels, a huge expansion of government — would do all that much to change global temperatures. Even in a progressive paradise like Washington State, Democrats can't get a carbon tax passed. The last referendum failed 57% to 43%. The time before that it was 59% to 41%.

Pelosi's Madrid sojourn was another empty climate gesture — not counting the carbon footprint of flying to get there.

Immigration, health care woes worsen fertility, life span data

Houston Chronicle

Americans are having fewer babies and dying faster. That grim reality should be part of the conversation as this country tries to get past the wall of political intransigence that has prevented it from constructing a saner immigration policy and better health care system.

It's time to tear down indiscriminate legal barriers that prevent the industries immigrants who could fill jobs and contribute to this country's well-being. More immigrants in the workforce and paying taxes could help prevent the Social Security and Medicare funding crisis predicted to result as the number of workers contributing to those programs declines. America last year, but that's particularly important given the report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that the nation's fertility rate fell for the fourth straight year in 2018; to 59.1 births for every 1,000 women of child-bearing age. There were about 3.8 million babies born in America last year, but that's down 2% since 2017 and 15% since 2007.

The most significant decline occurred among teenage women, which is good news. Their birth rate fell 74% last year and has declined 70% since 1991. Conversely, birth rates rose last year for women in their late 30s (up 1% to 52.6 births per 1,000 women) and in their early 40s (up 2% to 11.8 births per 1,000). Women are waiting longer to have children for a variety of reasons. The median age for a woman's first marriage has risen from age 21 in 1970 to 28 last year; and from 23 to 30 for men during that same span. The economy and work policies also play roles.

"It's hard to have children because of a lack of affordable child care and not very generous policies for parental leave, especially in comparison to many European countries," said Melanie Brasher, a University of Rhode Island demographer. And the other end of the spectrum, life expectancy in this country has declined for three straight years, according to a new report by the Journal of the American Medical Association — dropping to 78.6 years old in 2017. The three-year dip has reversed a trend that saw life expectancy grow from 69.9 years old in 1951 to 78.9 years old in 2014, though it's part of a long-term slide in which life expectancy in other wealthy nations outpaced that in America.

Suicide, drug overdoses, and a bevy of illnesses related to poor nutrition and lack of exercise — including obesity, hypertension and diabetes — were factors in the life expectancy decline. But so were factors like the lack of universal access to health care, the authors concluded. Like immigration, America's health care system is in desperate need of improvements, too.

Long before the impeachment inquiry began, Congress and President Donald Trump appeared incapable of forging

agreement on either issue. Now that each day in Washington seems to begin and end with the words Ukraine, Biden, or no quid pro quo, the odds are low for anything of substance being done until after 2020 — and even that will depend on who wins.

America needs someone truly capable of bridging the partisan divide before we're all dead and gone.

Harris' bid for top spot done, but her opportunities are not

San Francisco Chronicle

Kamala Harris' presidential campaign, which began in a burst of possibility like the Democratic election in June, ended abruptly for the most prosaic of reasons. It "simply doesn't have the financial resources we need to continue," she announced Tuesday.

Of course, in American politics, money magnetizes to bandwagons, and the wheels of the Harris campaign have been spinning in place for many weeks.

This campaign had its moments, and none was more full of anticipation than her announcement rally that drew more than 20,000 on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in Oakland. She owned the moment of the first Democratic debate in June, when she brazenly challenged former Vice President Joe Biden over his 1970s opposition to school busing as a means of forcing desegregation. "I was that girl," she pointedly noted about how desegregating Berkeley schools opened opportunity for her. Biden, the front-runner, was flummoxed.

But did it matter? What went wrong for the candidate who had such electrifying early moments? As much as anything, the moments were not matched by articulation of a clear agenda or sustained rationale for her candidacy. She initially embraced Medicare for All but then pivoted to California, which is the Holy Grail for the Democrats' progressive wing — then peeled back her support, citing her conversations with voters who wanted to keep their plans.

She seemed to struggle with whether to highlight her work as a prosecutor for San Francisco's Office of the Attorney General, which included decisions that created discomfort on the left. She was caught flat-footed in a July debate when Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, D-Hawaii, launched into a factually dubious but withering attack on the California senator's work as state attorney general.

By November, however, Harris' oddly trained her harshest lines against Gabbard instead of any of the four in the top tier. If there was a path for Harris, it was toward the center, where South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg and Sen. Amy Klobuchar gravitated — with some success — as Democratic pick. Harris' refusal to fade Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders had locked up the left with their unalloyed progressivism.

As the ideological lines became drawn more vividly, Harris was stuck in a vacuum of vacillation. The infighting within her campaign eventually became the subject of the Senate. Harris was all but certain to further chill any chance of fundraising that would be critical to a revived surge.

Thus the question: Was it worth it?

Anyone who has followed the junior senator's career from her San Francisco days knows she is studied, introspective and resilient. She will learn from this campaign. In many moments, it brought out her wit and a warmth with audiences that had formerly been a source of reluctance for a politician who guards her private life. She clearly has risen in national prominence, which will benefit her work on Capitol Hill — and in the White House.

She is likely to be on the short list for running mate no matter which Democrat ends up with the nomination. She also could be in line to become the next U.S. attorney general, or a top leadership post if the Democrats were to regain control of the Senate. Opportunity may yet come for Kamala Harris in 2020.

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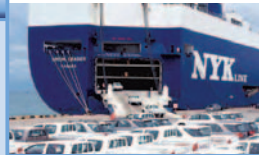
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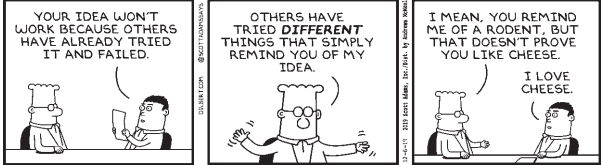
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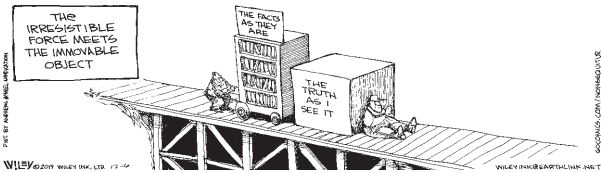
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Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15				16					17			
			18						19			
20	21					22	23					
24					25				26	27	28	
29				30					31			
32				33					34			
				35					36			
37	38	39						40				
41					42	43				44	45	
46					47				48			
49					50				51			

ACROSS

- Recipe abbr.
- Nanny's headache
- Fortas and Lincoln
- Galley item
- "Clumsy me!"
- Fishing rod
- Carpentry
- Low-fat
- Lingerie fabric
- Part of WWW
- Manages somehow
- Appear ominously
- Raw minerals
- Compilation of student exercises
- Mal de —
- Tender spots
- Long of "Soul Food"
- Library lover
- Suffix with song or gab
- Biography
- "Tiny Alice" playwright
- Lil' Abner's surname
- Aussie greeting
- Coup d'—
- Absinthe ingredient
- Whole range

DOWN

- AAA job
- Paulo
- "The Tempest" role
- Soup holders
- Castle
- Earth Day mo.
- "For shame!"
- Poise
- Dutch word that means "farmer"
- Mideast airline
- Fax
- Conks out
- Stir-fry pans
- Barber's tool
- Twistable cookie
- Peter of "M"
- Utah city
- Bark
- In single file
- French river
- Actress Winslet
- Take to the pool
- All thumbs
- Imperfection
- Fess up
- Calendar quota
- "Beetle Bailey" dog
- Evil agency in "Get Smart"
- Seize
- Bankroll
- Flamenco cry
- Not' heath
- Aachen article

Answer to Previous Puzzle

A	L	B	A	A	M	P	S	A	N	E
B	U	R	L	M	A	H	T	S	A	R
C	A	R	L	U	S	A	E	T	T	A
D	U	R	E	S	S	N	O	N	O	
					G	U	E	S	T	H
E	M	C	E	E	N	O	M		N	U
A	I	R	S		D	A	M	O	D	E
C	R	O		J	I	F	T	A	S	T
H	O	U	S	E	G	U	E	S	T	
			T	O	N	I		N	A	M
T	H	O	U		N	O	D	E	C	H
A	U	N	T		T	I	E		A	R
M	E	S	H		O	L	D		L	E

12-6

CRYPTOQUIP

QXLSP'D FGAS FJD PSOBTUJRU

UX SRUSP UQS UPJAAGT

AOXF. CSXCOS FSPS DQXBUGRH

"LSPHS. DGLCDXR!"

Yesterday's Cryptquip: GROUP WHERE EVERY AUTHORIZED PLAYER MUST HAVE JUMBO-SIZED LOWER LIMBS: MAJOR-LEG BASEBALL.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: F equals W

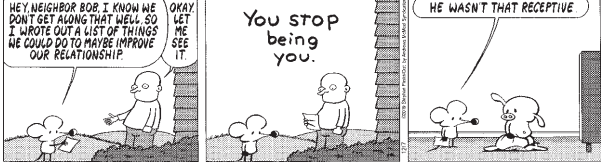
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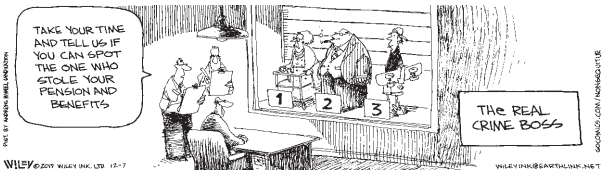
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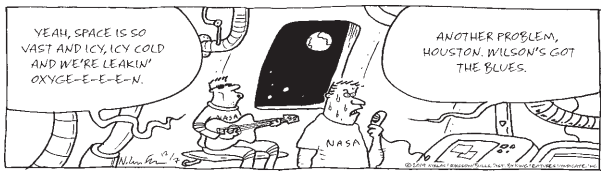
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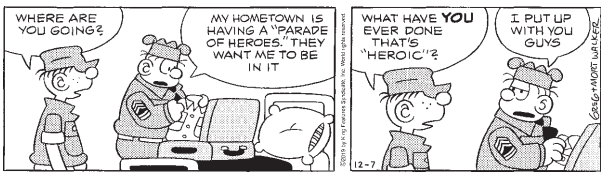
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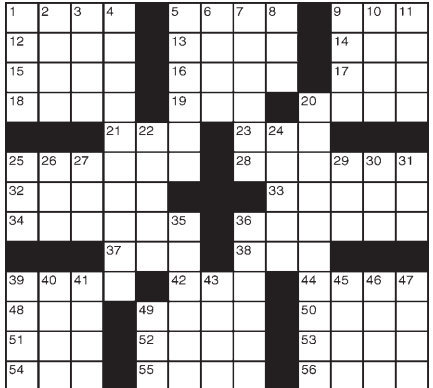
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Bizarro



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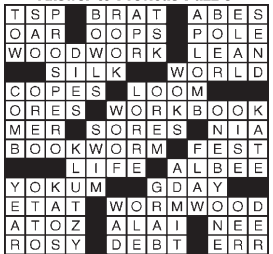
ACROSS

- 1 Dogpatch creator
- 5 Closet invader
- 9 Male turkey
- 12 Verbal
- 13 Awestruck
- 14 Popular card game
- 15 News reporter Logan
- 16 Jog
- 17 Tavern
- 18 Online auction site
- 19 CSA soldier
- 20 Logical
- 21 Buddy
- 23 Museum display
- 25 Kid's coloring stick
- 28 Considered
- 32 Shower bars?
- 33 Speak one's mind
- 34 Slanted type
- 36 Church volumes
- 37 — Lingus
- 38 Olympic gymnast — Raisman
- 39 Unravel
- 42 "Suits" network
- 44 Boutique
- 48 Remiss
- 49 Uppity one
- 50 Carton sealer
- 51 Bio stat

DOWN

- 21 Pac-12 school
- 23 Lamb alias
- 25 Ballot marks
- 55 Ostrich kin
- 56 Equal
- 22 Wartime riveter
- 24 Lubricate anew
- 25 Hit CBS series
- 26 Hogwash
- 27 Bond rating
- 29 Wire measure
- 30 Away from WSW
- 31 — Moines
- 35 Ab-toning exercise
- 36 Start of a nursery rhyme
- 39 Linen source
- 40 Fury
- 41 Chopping tools
- 43 Only
- 45 Robust
- 46 Mayberry tyke
- 47 Hefty horn
- 10 — incline (tilted)
- 11 "Encore!"
- 20 Incremental

Answer to Previous Puzzle



12-7

CRYPTOQUIP

HATKGLDO UJHEDO MUA
KODFDVLQ J LDQL QARLMJOD
FDOQWAV ROAT SDLLWVS
PWQLOWYGLDP: J YDLJ
YCAHEDO.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: HOMER'S WIFE WAS RELUCTANT TO ENTER THE TRAFFIC FLOW. PEOPLE WERE SHOUTING "MERGE, SIMPSON!"
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals T

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College football

Schedule

Friday's game

Pac-12 Championship: Oregon (10-2) vs. Utah (11-1) at Charlotte, Calif.

Saturday's game

Sun Belt Championship: Louisiana-Lafayette (10-2) at Appalachian St. (11-1)

Conference USA Championship: UAB (9-3) at FAU (9-3)

American Athletic Championship: Cincinnati (10-2) at Memphis (11-1)

SEC Championship: LSU (12-0) vs. Georgia (11-1) at Atlanta

SWAC Championship: Southern (8-4) at Alcorn St. (9-3)

ACC Championship: Clemson (12-0) vs. Virginia (9-3) at Charlotte, N.C.

Midwest

Mid-American Championship: Miami (10-0) (7-5) vs. Central Michigan (8-4) at Detroit

Big Ten Championship: Ohio State (12-0) vs. Wisconsin (10-2) at Indianapolis

Big 12 Championship: Baylor (11-1) vs. Oklahoma (11-1) at Arlington, Texas

Far West

Mountain West Championship: Hawaii (9-4) at Boise State (11-1)

NCAA FCS playoffs

First Round

Monmouth (NJ) 44, Holy Cross 27

Albany (NY) 42, Central Connecticut 34

Illinois State 24, Southeast Missouri State 6

Northern Iowa 17, San Diego 3

Austin Peay 42, Furman 6

Kennesaw State 28, Wofford 21

Nicholls 24, North Dakota 6

North Dakota State 35, Minnesota 4

Second Round

Monmouth (NJ) 11-2) at James Madison (11-1)

Northern Iowa 9-4) at South Dakota State (8-4)

Kennesaw State 11-2) at Weber State (9-3)

Albany (NY) 9-4) at Montana State (9-3)

Southeastern Louisiana 8-4) at Montana State (9-3)

Illinois State 9-4) at Central Arkansas (12-0)

Nicholls 9-4) at North Dakota State (12-0)

Austin Peay 10-3) at Sacramento State (9-3)

NCAA Division II playoffs

Second Round

Notre Dame (20), Kutztown 17

Slicker Rock 33, Shepherd 20

West Florida 38, Valdosta State 30

Robert Ulat 37, Central Missouri 10

Northwest Missouri State 63, Lindenwood 3

Minnesota State 35, Colorado State-Pueblo 1

American Commerce 23, Colorado School of Mines 3

Lenoir-Rhyne 49, Carson-Newman 21

Quarterfinals

Notre Dame (10) (12-1) at Slippery Rock 3

West Florida (10-2) at Lenoir-Rhyne (13-0)

Northwest Missouri State (12-1) at Ferris State (11-0)

Texas A&M Commerce (12-2) at Minnesota State (12-0)

NCAA Division III playoffs

Second Round

Salisbury 10, Union College 41

Muhlenberg 42, Brockport 0

Western Valley 49, Wesley 10

Marjory-Baylor 42, Huntington 6

Whitaker 41, Wartburg 28

St. John's (Conn.) 19, Central Iowa 13

West Virginia (Minn.) 55, Chapman 26

Quarterfinals

Muhlenberg (12-0) at Salisbury (11-0)

North Central (Ill.) (11-1) at Delaware State (11-1)

Whitaker (12-0) at Wesleyan (11-1)

St. John's (Minn.) (11-1) at Wheaton College (11-0)

NIAA playoffs

Quarterfinals

Morningside 51, Saint Xavier 0

Northwestern 35, St. Joseph 24

Marion 14, Col. of Idaho 6

Marion 14, Col. of Idaho 6

Semifinals

Lincoln University 12-0) at Marian (Ind.) (11-0)

Grand View (13-0) at Morningside (12-0)

Pro basketball

NBA

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Atlantic Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	15	5	750	—
Philadelphia	15	5	750	—
Brooklyn	11	10	524	1/2
New York	10	12	455	1/2

Central Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	10	16	385	—
Orlando	10	16	385	—
Charlotte	9	17	345	1/2
Washington	9	17	345	1/2
Atlanta	5	27	120	1 1/2

Southwest Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	19	3	864	—
Indiana	14	8	636	1/2
Detroit	8	14	364	1 1/2
Chicago	8	14	364	1 1/2
Cleveland	5	25	133	1 1/2

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Dallas	6	21	286	—
Houston	13	7	650	1/2
San Antonio	8	14	364	1 1/2
Memphis	15	5	286	1 1/2
New Orleans	6	15	286	1 1/2

Northwest Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Denver	13	5	722	—
Portland	12	8	600	1/2
Minnesota	10	10	500	1/2
Portland	9	13	409	1/2
Oklahoma City	6	16	273	1 1/2

Pacific Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	13	8	364	—
L.A. Clippers	16	6	727	1/2
Sacramento	8	12	400	1 1/2
Golden State	9	14	391	1 1/2

Wednesday's games

Charlotte 126, Phoenix State 91

Oklahoma City 107, Detroit 100

Oklahoma City 107, Detroit 100

Oklahoma City 107, Detroit 100

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Pro hockey

NHL

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	28	20	3	5
Florida	27	13	5	1
Montreal	28	12	6	0
Carolina	25	13	1	1
Tampa Bay	25	13	9	1
Detroit	30	7	20	13

Metropolitan Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Washington	28	10	5	12
N.Y. Islanders	26	18	6	2
Pittsburgh	28	15	9	4
N.Y. Rangers	26	13	10	3
Columbus	27	12	4	6
New Jersey	29	11	14	22

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Central Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
St. Louis	27	17	8	42
Colorado	27	17	8	42
Winnipeg	28	17	10	35
Dallas	29	15	11	3
Chicago	28	13	14	20
Edmonton	30	17	10	33
Arizona	29	16	9	3
Vegas	30	14	11	4
Calgary	29	13	12	4
Los Angeles	29	11	16	2

Pacific Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
San Jose	28	10	3	37
Vancouver	29	14	11	4
Calgary	29	13	12	4
Los Angeles	29	11	16	2

Note

Two points for a win, one point for an overtime loss, two points for each division and two wild cards per conference.

Wednesday's games

Colorado 3, Toronto 1

Pittsburgh 5, St. Louis 0

Ottawa 5, Edmonton 2

Washington 3, Los Angeles 1

Thursday's games

Arizona 3, Philadelphia 1

Vegas at N.Y. Islanders

Y.N. Rangers at Columbus

Minnesota at Tampa Bay

Colorado at Montreal

San Jose at Carolina

Buffalo at Calgary

Friday's games

Chicago at New Jersey

Montreal at N.Y. Rangers

Colorado at Pittsburgh

Los Angeles at Edmonton

Washington at Anaheim

Saturday's games

Buffalo at Philadelphia

Colorado at Vancouver

Ottawa at Boston

San Jose at Carolina

San Jose at Tampa Bay

Washington St. Louis

Columbus at Florida

Pittsburgh at Detroit

New Jersey at Nashville

N.Y. Islanders at Dallas

San Jose at Carolina

Sunday's games

Anaheim at Winnipeg

San Jose at Florida

N.Y. Rangers at Vegas

Buffalo at Edmonton

NHL leaders

David Pastrnak, Boston

Alex Ovechkin, Washington

Connor McDavid, Edmonton

Linus Draxler, Edmonton

Brad Marchand, Colorado

Jack Eichel, Buffalo

Connor McDavid, Toronto

Jack Eichel, Pittsburgh

Linus Draxler, Ottawa

Patrick Kane, Chicago

Jack Eichel, Buffalo

Connor McDavid, Toronto

Jack Eichel, Pittsburgh

Linus Draxler, Ottawa

Patrick Kane, Chicago

Jack Eichel, Buffalo

Connor McDavid, Toronto

Jack Eichel, Pittsburgh

Linus Draxler, Ottawa

Patrick Kane, Chicago

Jack Eichel, Buffalo

Connor McDavid, Toronto

Jack Eichel, Pittsburgh

Linus Draxler, Ottawa

Patrick Kane, Chicago

Jack Eichel, Buffalo

HIGH SCHOOL: DODEA PACIFIC

Blackhawks look to keep perspective

By DAVE ORNAUER
Stars and Stripes

After going 33-0 and winning a school-first Far East Division I boys basketball title, the question is: Can Humphreys do it all again?

Key to the Blackhawks' fortunes, coach Ron Merriwether says, is making sure that his players maintain perspective, and, most importantly, keep their egos in check.

"First thing is to make sure my players don't have a huge head," Merriwether said. "My main concern is building the maturity that's needed to weather the storm throughout the season. That's where most of my challenge lies. We have new pieces."

J.B. Pope, a three-point specialist for Daegu last year, will shoot those baseline distance shots for the Blackhawks this season. Myles Johnson transfers to Humphreys from Barksdale Air Force Base, La.

And there's 6-foot-4 junior Collin Metcalf, who steps into the shoes vacated by his older brother, Quintin, a three-time Far East Most Valuable Player. Junior Connor Coyne will try to replace the all-around play of Jalen Hill.

"It's just putting the pieces together and getting them to gel at the right time," Merriwether said. Humphreys will again travel to the American School In Japan Kanto Classic in January. It's where Merriwether says his team will get its biggest tests heading into Far East.

"Most of our competition is going to come in Japan," he said. "I have confidence in what we're doing here. Things aren't going to work so easily when we're away from home. We need that kind of test."

They'll get challenges in the likes of Kadena, which returns four of its five starters, including center Blake Dearborn and guard Casey Cox.

Last year's D-I runner-up, Kinnick, only returns one starter from last year.

Saleem Malik takes over at Kubasaki, its first new coach in 12 years, replacing Jon Pick, who steps aside with five D-I titles.

Among new coaches is one veteran face, Devin Robinson, MVP of the Far East Division II tournament three years ago who's back as an assistant with his former E-I King team. His younger brother, Dyson, earned MJM honors for the defending D-II champion Cobras.

From a lineup standpoint, the Cobras also welcome D-II cross country champion L.J. Scarver.

He left as the Cobras' second-leading scorer at the



LYL AUSTINSON/Special to Stars and Stripes

Humphreys junior Collin Metcalf is looking to fill the shoes at center of his older brother, three-time Far East MVP Quintin Metcalf.

middle of last season to focus on track and field, but returns along with guards, junior James Meacham and senior Jalen Nail.

The Cobras don't have the height they had a season ago, but are quicker and faster, Elliott said. "They're excited to play with L.J. again," Elliott said. "That was a big pickup, adding him back to the roster. It's making our transition that much smoother and maybe stronger. That all they do is play basketball together, their chemistry is that much better."

Perhaps the Cobras' strongest contender might be Edgren, which lost its senior core but brings in several freshmen who have matriculated in Misawa Air Base's Jets club program.

Both Osan and Daegu in Korea are in full rebuild mode. And Zama welcomes its third coach in four seasons, William Guion, a Navy seaman at Naval Air Facility Atsugi.

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Zama girls seeing spoils of winning

By DAVE ORNAUER
Stars and Stripes

CAMP ZAMA, Japan — What a difference that first championship season has made for Zama's girls basketball team.

Just seven players tried out last year, when the Trojans went on to capture their first DODEA Japan and Far East Division II titles.

Those numbers increased to 12 in November, just after Zama won Far East in girls volleyball. The Trojans also won the girls soccer crown in May.

"Now that the other sports are winning, there's more interest" in coming out to play for Trojans teams, said senior guard Kirari Smith, one of seven returning Trojans and one of three All-Far East starters.

"When I was a freshman, there wasn't much interest in basketball (because) Zama had never won Far East before," Smith said, adding that the atmosphere around school, in practices, is much different. "I'm so excited for this season."

Joining Smith, a shooting guard, is reigning D-II Most Valuable Player Chloe Sterling, a sophomore guard, and senior center Jessica Atkinson. Some of the new Trojans "have never played before, but they're doing pretty good," Smith said.

Despite the Trojans' recent success, coach Daisy Whitaker-Hayes says she's not wanting to look too far ahead.

"I don't like to make predictions; things change," she said. "We'll need good defense, small things like rebounding, boxing out, getting second opportunities on offense and putting everything we do in practice together."

Still, the Trojans enter the season as the D-II team to beat, with

the likes of Daegu, last year's runner-up, chasing. Junior Bethani Newbold returns at point guard, but the Warriors must make do without middle force Dai'Ja Turner, who left for the States.

Hoping to take the final step toward that Far East Division I title that's eluded it the last three years since winning the 2016 title, Kadena thought it would open the season without two of its key starters, including two-time All-Far East guard Atrina Simms.

But Simms got medical clearance to practice despite a knee-ligament issue, and senior forward Lydia Rice also returned to practice after recovering from foot stress fractures.

Panthers coach Johnny Cooper said he's anticipating having Simms up to full speed by the American School In Japan Kanto Classic in mid-January, while Rice said she anticipates playing in Friday's opener at Kubasaki.

"I want to believe when I see it," Cooper said of Simms, adding that the Panthers were already strong without them, thanks to transfers and adding freshmen and sophomores who are not new to basketball. "We're 13 deep, strong top to bottom."

Kadena's main challenge the past three years has come in the Far East D-I tournament against first-time defending champion American School Bangkok.

The Eagles lost three-time MVP Shanique Lucas — the coach's daughter — to Division III Union (Tenn.).

"The girls are finding their way and adapting to games without her and adapting to new roles," the elder Lucas said, adding that the Eagles will "definitely" beat host Taipei American in the tournament.

Osan wrestling no longer grappling with low numbers

By DAVE ORNAUER
Stars and Stripes

There were just two wrestlers in the Osan practice room two years ago, setting off concerns about an "empty room syndrome" at some of the smaller programs in Korea.

That appeared to follow a trend of lower numbers each season.

But the Cougars had six wrestlers a year ago and this season coach Andrew Grant says there have been as many as 26 at practices.

The last time the Cougars had that many in the room was in 2000, by coincidence the last time Osan won a Korea League title.

So what has changed over the last few years?

"Recruiting has really made the difference," Grant said, adding that he and his core of returning wrestlers talked with anybody who looked like they might contribute. "Those who have experience only

had positive things to say" about the program, Grant said.

"We also got some help from the football team" which won the Far East Division II title in 2018 and fell just short of returning to the D-II final last month.

"We made it a point to get recruit (from the football ranks) and tell them (wrestling) would be beneficial to both us and the football team," Grant said.

Add to that an influx of three transfers from other schools, no fewer than four girls on the mat — including one transfer from Edgren — and as many as eight middle schoolers, and the room can sometimes get crowded, Grant said.

"Everyone's into it," said returning Far East 158-pound champion Marcus Inthavixay. "There's a lot of enthusiasm for the sport. There's a lot more talent than last year. I know they want to do better."

The Cougars are augmented this season by 148-pounder Donald Williams, late of Seoul American which closed in June;

former Edgren 122-pounder Samantha Hendrickson; and Ramil Celones, a 148-58-pounder who moved in from Yokota over the summer.

The returners and new faces give Osan the possibility of filling every weight class.

Kubasaki's lineup got a boost when a state champion from Florida moved in to fill in at 180 pounds.

Colin Nation, late of Tampa Prep, says the wrestling differs in terms of competitive level between Florida and the Pacific, but what he sees in the Dragons' lineup gives him hope.

"There's a good wrestler in every weight," Nation said of a mostly junior and senior lineup including 2019 Far East champions Jaylan Mayers and Haydn Peterson. "With our lineup, we may be able to win it."

"He brings a lot to the table. He's a really great kid," coach Brent Cook said of Nation, who along with Peterson, Mayers

and returners Colin Lundberg and Victor Savedra serves as a coach on the mat.

"They're running on auto pilot; it's like having five coaches in the room," Cook said.

One issue facing Tokyo-area wrestling programs is the referee contract that covers the Kanto Plain Association of Secondary Schools has expired, and no new contract signing appears imminent, DODEA Pacific officials and school coaches said.

No matches have been canceled, but alternative sites are being sought. DODEA Japan schools wrestle this Saturday at Perry and next weekend at Edgren; both schools have referees under contract, DODEA Pacific athletics coordinator Tom McKinney said.

Beyond that, the schedule is in flux, with even the "Beast of the Far East" scheduled for January 25, now in a "state of limbo," according to Kinnick assistant coach and "Beast" organizer Dan Joley. A new site is being considered.

HIGH SCHOOL: DODEA EUROPE

Pigge', Royals headlines

By GREGORY BROOME
Stars and Stripes

The DODEA Europe boys basketball season gets started this weekend and already features fascinating storylines at the league, team and individual levels.

DODEA Europe's offseason realignment will figure prominently into the league championships this winter, abruptly ending Black Forest Academy's Division II reign and introducing new postseason threats in all three divisions.

At the team level, Ramstein will look to stretch its Division I dynasty to an unprecedented sixth season.

And this season may well bring about another leap for Baumholder's gifted 6-foot-4 junior Chandler Pigge', who was the Stars and Stripes boys basketball Athlete of the Year last year after leading the Bucs to a D-III title. He has a chance to be among the best players ever produced by a DODEA Europe program.

Division I

Ramstein's fifth straight championship last winter felt like the end of an era with the graduation of program centerpiece Naser Eaves and Gabe Fraley. But it's just as likely that the Royals produce more of the same this season.

Three seniors, each key contributors to previous Royals titles, now hold the keys to the D-I dynasty. Point guard Jerod Little, sharpshooter Luis Figueroa and 6-foot-3 forward Jason Jones Jr. give Ramstein top-flight talent on the ball, on the wing and in the paint.

The Royals will tangle with foes both fresh and familiar as they look to prolong their reign.

German neighbors Kaiserslautern, Stuttgart, Vilsack and Wiesbaden will offer renewed resistance. Kaiserslautern has been on the wrong end of Ramstein's dynasty for

years, including the past two European championships games, and remains eager to reverse that trend. Stuttgart has a huge frontcourt with which to overpower opponents. Vilsack enjoys unusual continuity with four of five starters returning. Wiesbaden will be led by a talented senior backcourt.

Lakenheath and SHAPE, meanwhile, will see where they stand immediately as they each visit Ramstein this weekend.

Black Forest Academy, the former Division II powerhouse, makes its Division I debut this winter after realignment. The Falcons figure to be very competitive, returning five of their top seven players from last year's champions.

Division II

The good news for this year's incumbent D-II programs is that they'll no longer have to deal with BFA. The bad news is that they will again have to deal with Naples and Vicenza.

The two Italian schools are back in the Division II bracket after five years in Division I, a consequence of DODEA Europe's move to bring more geographic order to the divisional structure. The move reunites Naples and Vicenza with their Italian peers.

Aviano won't ground easily, though. The Saints return all five of their starters to a senior-driven squad built to make a run in the tournament.

But it's Division II's most distant school seeking to make the most noise this winter. Bahrain has been a rising divisional power for years and gave Black Forest a worthy challenge in last year's title game. The Falcons join Spain-based Rota as interlopers in a revamped division that is now 75% Italian.

Division III

DODEA Europe hasn't seen a player with the all-around ability of Baumholder's Pigge' in many years.



BRIAN FERGUSON/Stars and Stripes

Baumholder's Chandler Pigge scores during last season's 70-65 Division III basketball championship win over against Ansbach. Pigge was the Stars and Stripes boys basketball Athlete of the Year.

A 6-foot-4 point guard, Pigge' is both the most physically imposing player and the most skilled, scoring at will from anywhere on the court, whipping precision passes to open teammates and making winning plays on defense and on the boards. He blossomed into the best player in the league and led the Bucs to a long-awaited European title.

Pigge's presence makes Baumholder the runaway favorite to repeat, but the Bucs' case is helped by the return of three other starters from last year's group. They'll again be challenged by a new-look group from returning runner-up Ansbach, a promising Spangdahlem squad deploying a modern pace-and-space system and a seasoned Brussels team led by senior point guard Jalen Pollard.

Wrestling

Stuttgart, Ramstein unrivaled

By GREGORY BROOME
Stars and Stripes

There's an old sports saying that a rivalry isn't really a rivalry if the same team always wins.

That's not the case in DODEA Europe wrestling. While Stuttgart has won the past six Division I championships, its ongoing feud with perennial runner-up Ramstein is one of the organization's best in any sport.

The Panthers will begin their pursuit of another European championship Saturday as they host one of three season-opening meets Ramstein will be participating along with fellow D-I foes Kaiserslautern and Vilsack. Lakenheath welcomes six schools to its northern meet, and Aviano hosts the southern schools.

The reigning champion Panthers have considerable work to do to retain their title, as they don't field any defending individual champions.

"It is going to be a tough year and we will be working hard with what we have," Panthers coach Norm Schmitt says. "Either way we're going to have fun."

But that's not to say they don't have championship-caliber talent. Junior McKinley Fielding will again attempt to become DODEA Europe's first female wrestling champion, making another run at the 106-pound crown after two consecutive runner-up finishes. Freshman Brogan Fielding figures to make an immediate impact of his own as the latest member of the family grappling dynasty at Stuttgart.

Returning runner-up Christian Just and 2019 third-place finishers Carter Hanes and David Segalla also are back.

The Royals will counter with a pair of defending champions in Conner Mackie and Teddy Ward headlining a remarkable deep roster that also includes 2019 second-place finishers Matthew Oreskovich, Christian Griffith and Gabe Davis. Coach Thomas Wright said enough students tried out for the team for Ramstein to field three wrestlers at each of the 14 weight classes.

Such depth goes a long way at the European tournament, and it will be difficult for any Division I team to challenge the Panthers and Royals in that regard. Wiesbaden has former champion Attya Khan and 16 returning wrestlers; Vilsack has a pair of elite performers in Johnathan Alvarado and Hyrum Draper, but is limited by a small roster.

Rota has the inside track on a Division II repeat. The Admirals also have 30 returning wrestlers, three turnouts and a strong core of contenders in Jacar Rivera, Philip Rivera and Brenon Colvin.

Former D-I challenger Spangdahlem is the early D-III favorite behind sophomore 120-pounder Carson Allen, who has been a dominant name in the 113-pound title.

Stuttgart stands out despite division shake-up

By GREGORY BROOME
Stars and Stripes

Realignment will have a big impact on all three divisional races in girls basketball this season, which gets underway this weekend.

Black Forest Academy's rise to Division I introduces a worthy new challenger to the bracket, while Naples and Vicenza slide in to replace the Falcons as D-II powers. And for the second straight year, a former Division II heavyweight will elbow its way into contention in D-III.

Division I

Reigning dynasty Stuttgart welcomes back a remarkable 11 players for its shot at a fourth straight title, making the Panthers a heavy early favorite to extend the streak. Junior forward Sky DaSilva Mathis headlines the seasoned squad.

Ramstein won the 2016 title ahead of the Panthers' current run and has fallen to Stuttgart in two of its three straight championship game victories. Returning starters Alexis Tri, Shannon McCray and Rachael Babbitt will lead the program's latest attempt to unseat the Panthers, and Ramstein coach Nathan Brewster has already identified the path forward.

"We have a fast team," Brewster said. "And we like to run."

Kaiserslautern, meanwhile, is largely starting over this winter after retaining no starters from last year's semifinals. Rotation players Rebecca Moon and Azora Williams headline a revamped Raiders roster that coach Aaron Scalise filled out with "an influx of new student-athletes" focused on "daily improvement."

That's a theme throughout Division I, as



MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

Bahrain's Tasneem Abdikhair shoots against Aviano's Keyona Williams during a game at last season's DODEA Europe Division II championships.

programs such as Wiesbaden and Vilsack also return two or fewer starters.

"They are already working well together and showing a love of the game and growing their skills as a team," Wiesbaden coach Carla Nau-Redman said of her young group.

The trend even extends to Black Forest Academy, who will find an all-new starting five in its Division I debut season.

Division II

Realignment cost this division two of last year's finalists: runner-up AFWORTH and third-place Black Forest. But what the bracket gained is equally notable.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

ACC-omplished: Playmakers abound in game

Clemson, Virginia ride talented rosters to conference title game

By PETE IACOBELLI
Associated Press

CLEMSON, S.C. — Clemson coach Dabo Swinney hasn't stopped thinking about Virginia quarterback Bryce Perkins since the 22nd-ranked Cavaliers clinched their spot in the Atlantic Coast Conference championship game last week.

"He's a guy you've got to account for," Swinney said. "He'll go 50 (yards), he'll go 60."

And Perkins isn't the only Cavalier with big-play potential the third-ranked Tigers (12-0, No. 3 College Football Playoff) will need to contain when they take on Virginia (9-3) in Charlotte, N.C., on Saturday night.

Cavaliers receivers Joe Reed and Hasise Dubois have a combined for 1,476 yards and nine touchdowns.

Perkins leads the league in total offense with 303 yards a game. He's had a hand in 27 of Virginia's 50 touchdowns this season (16 passing, 11 rushing) and is at his best, Clemson defensive coordinator Brent Venables said, when things break down.

"I just look at him as a great player on his own. He's the heart and soul" of the Cavaliers, Venables said. "He's just difficult to defend."

Perkins made second team all-ACC while Reed, the league leader in kick returns, was picked as a first-team all-purpose player.

The Tigers had 16 players named to All-ACC teams on Tuesday.

One of them at the top of the list is Perkins' counterpart, Clemson's Trevor Lawrence, who has thrown 30 touchdowns, 10 of them for 30 yards or more. Another is Tigers tailback Travis Etienne, who leads the ACC with 16 rushing touchdowns and set the league career mark for running TDs with 53.

On the offense, Clemson is power-packed, too, with receivers Tee Higgins and Justin Ross combining for 1,548 yards and 17 touchdowns.

Lawrence, Etienne and Higgins are all part of the all-ACC first-team offense.

"They have a great quarterback. They have a great running back. They have great receivers, good tight ends and everything. The (offensive) line is obviously real good," Virginia linebacker Zane Zandier said. "A lot of us are just real excited."

Cavaliers coach Bronco Mendenhall knows the challenge his team is up against.

He said the Tigers offense is a matchup nightmare because of all the ways they can advance the football. The bevy of standout players makes it nearly impossible to take away one aspect and expect to shut Clemson down.



MATT GENTRY, THE ROANOKE TIMES/AP

Virginia quarterback Bryce Perkins, left, leads the ACC in total offense with 303 yards a game and has had a hand in 27 of the Cavaliers' 50 touchdowns this season (16 passing, 11 rushing).



ACC Championship
No. 3 Clemson (12-0)
vs. No. 22 Virginia (9-3)
AFN-Sports
1:30 a.m. Sunday CET
9:30 a.m. Sunday JKT



SEAN RAYFORD/AP

Clemson quarterback Trevor Lawrence has helped his team average 541 yards and 45 points a game this season.

moment too big. That's something that's easy to do," he said.

Clemson's been able to easily navigate any bumps during games this year — it has won 27 straight games.

Swinney believes that in the chase to find flaws, a sublime season by his Tigers has been

somewhat overlooked. He said his offense and defense are playing at higher levels than at this point in Clemson's 15-0 national championship season a year ago.

"Will they finish?" Swinney asked. "I don't know."

Virginia hopes to have a say in that.

By the numbers

16

Clemson players who made the All-ACC team, including eight first-team selections.

10

Virginia players who made the All-ACC team, including one first-teamer.

8.3

Yard-per-carry average for Clemson running back Travis Etienne, tops in the ACC.

SOURCE: Associated Press

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Contrast: Burrow, Fromm both winners

FROM BACK PAGE

wants the ball in his hands. He wants to make the play."

Fromm matched his career high with four TD passes last week as Georgia (11-1, No. 4 CFP) rolled to a 52-7 win over Georgia Tech. Even in the runaway win, it was the fourth straight game in which Fromm failed to complete half of his passes.

Oregon said he couldn't explain Fromm's slump.

"I do know this. He's a winner," Oregon said. "I think he's a fantastic young man. He's a leader. They believe in him at Georgia and he's won a lot of games. That tells you a lot about a quarterback."

Indeed, Fromm's most impressive statistic is his 34-6 record as a starter.

Fromm can't match Burrow's passing numbers, but the edge for the Georgia junior may be his big-game experience. Fromm will make his third straight start in the SEC championship game, following a win over Auburn in 2017 and a loss to Alabama last year.

LSU safety JaCoby Stevens said Fromm is "basically a pro type quarterback in the backfield. He's very mature in his decision-making. He can make throws that a lot of quarterbacks in college football can't make."

Led by Burrow and running back Clyde Edwards-Helaire, LSU has found balance on offense.

"I think the difference between us this year and last year is we're kind of throwing the ball to open up the run, and Clyde and those O-linemen are taking advantage," Burrow said, adding he believes Edwards-Helaire "is the best back in the country."

Georgia's hopes of beating LSU and winning its second SEC title in the last three years under coach Kirby Smart may rest on Fromm's ability to shake out of the passing slump.

Unfortunately for the Bulldogs, Fromm's season-long adjustment to changes at wide receiver con-



**No. 4 Georgia (11-1)
vs. No. 1 LSU (12-0)**
AFN-Sports2
10 p.m. Saturday CET
6 a.m. Sunday JKT

tinues. Freshman George Pickens will be suspended for the first half as punishment for his ejection for fighting in the second half against Georgia Tech. Pickens is tied for the team lead in receptions with Lawrence Cager, who won't play following ankle surgery last week.

Smart said the "biggest difference" for Fromm this season has been his receivers.

"There's not been a level of consistency with the perimeter skill that there probably was last year," Smart said.

Fromm has thrown a combined five touchdown passes with no interceptions in the last two SEC championship games.

One year ago, Fromm outplayed Alabama's Tua Tagovailoa in the SEC title game, throwing for 301 yards and three touchdowns. Jalen Hurts entered the game to lead Alabama to a 35-28 win over the Bulldogs.

Fromm threw for two touchdowns in Georgia's 28-7 win over Auburn for the 2017 SEC championship.

Georgia has averaged almost 33 points per game with first-year offensive coordinator James Coley. It's good production but well below LSU's league-leading average of 48.7.

"For us, I think it's just getting the whole unit to buy into what we're trying to do as an offense," Fromm said Monday, adding "...it's all about all 11 guys moving in the same direction."



JOSHUA L. JONES, ATHENS BANNER-HERALD/AP

Georgia quarterback Jake Fromm throws against Georgia Tech last week in Atlanta. Fromm will make his third straight start in the SEC championship game when the Bulldogs face No. 1 LSU on Saturday.



PAUL SANCYA/AP

Ohio State defensive lineman Robert Landers celebrates recovering a fumble against the Wolverines last Saturday in Ann Arbor, Mich. The Buckeyes' end-of-the-season gantlet continues following a 28-17 win over Penn State on Nov. 23 and last week's 56-27 triumph over rival Michigan when they host the No. 10 Wisconsin Badgers on Saturday in the Big Ten championship.

Buckeyes expect better

No. 2 Ohio State not betting on another blowout of No. 10 Wisconsin

By MITCH STACY
Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio State coach Ryan Day expects to see a much better Wisconsin team in the Big Ten championship game than the one routed by the Buckeyes five weeks ago.

In that Oct. 26 game, the Badgers stayed with Ohio State through halftime and trailed 10-7 early in the second half before the Buckeyes exploded and rolled to a 38-7 win. All-American defensive end Chase Young recorded four sacks in the game.

"We're both different teams at this point," Day said Sunday during a conference call with reporters. He has led second-ranked Ohio State to a 12-0 record (9-0 Big Ten, No. 1 CFP) and a berth in the conference title game in his first year as head coach.

"I've seen teams change and they take on different personalities as the season goes on, and they're playing really, really good football," Day said.

After back-to-back losses to surprising Illinois and then Ohio State, No. 10 Wisconsin (10-2, 7-2 Big Ten, No. 12 CFP) won its first four, including Saturday's 38-17 rout of Minnesota to lock up the Big Ten West title and advance to face Ohio State at climate-controlled Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis this week.

For the Buckeyes, it will be another rigorous game in an end-of-the-season gantlet that included a 28-17 victory over Penn State on Nov. 23 and a 56-27 triumph over rival Michigan in Ann Arbor on Saturday.

"I think we're getting into the



STACY BENGS/AP

Wisconsin RB Bradrick Shaw celebrates with Paul Bunyan's Axe after the Badgers defeated the Minnesota Golden Gophers 38-17 last week in Minneapolis.

hythm of playing four-quarter games against really good opponents in a 'March Madness' approach," Day said. "And you know we're at this point of the season playing for championships, every game is going to be a four-quarter dogfight. And so I think we are getting into a little bit of a rhythm that way now."

Wisconsin coach Paul Chryst and his players are eager to have another shot at the Buckeyes.

"I certainly think there's a sense of eagerness or excitement that you've done all that you can



**No. 2 Ohio State (12-0)
vs. No. 10 Wisconsin (10-2)**
AFN-Prime
2 a.m. Sunday CET
10 a.m. Sunday JKT

and you get a right to play in this game," Chryst said. "There's a lot of things that had to happen, and the focus needed to be on playing the season out and you look up (at the end) and see what you've earned the right to do."

Jack Coan threw for 280 yards and two touchdowns against Minnesota on Saturday to win back Paul Bunyan's Axe after watching the Gophers snatch it away in the 2018 rivalry game.

"I'd say we're definitely a resilient group," Coan said. "That was one of the things we were preaching coming into this year, because last year we lost a few games, and it kind of went downhill. We were going to make sure that didn't happen again."

Chryst said the biggest difference over the last month of the season was more players getting involved in the Badgers' success.

"I think in the last few games, some out of necessity and some out of natural growth, more guys are contributing," he said. "Take a look back at kind of our last four games. A lot of guys made significant contributions."

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Better 'D'

OU, Baylor falling back on improved defenses

By CLIFF BRUNT
Associated Press



Big 12 championship
Oklahoma Sooners (11-1)
vs. Baylor Bears (11-1)
AFN-Sports
6 p.m. Saturday CET
2 a.m. Sunday JKT

During the first half of a showdown with Baylor last month, Oklahoma's defense looked a lot like the unit that ranked among the worst in the nation a year ago.

Similar struggles during a loss to Kansas State and a late escape against Iowa State in its previous two games had left Oklahoma without wiggle room. Now, the Sooners trailed Baylor 31-10, and their College Football Playoff hopes were slipping away.

The Sooners assessed the situation at halftime.

"It was just kind of about doing your job," linebacker Kenneth Murray said. "The biggest thing was just keeping the faith and understanding that doing your job is enough. As long as we keep our faith and continue to fight and don't give up, then good things will happen."

Suddenly, all the things first-year defensive coordinator Alex Grinch has emphasized began happening. There was pressure on the quarterback. The Sooners got third-down stops and forced

turnovers. Oklahoma shut Baylor out in the second half, a critical part of a rally that ended with a 34-31 win.

Oklahoma's defense remained strong in wins over TCU and Oklahoma State, and now the sixth-ranked Sooners (11-1, 8-1 Big 12, No. 6 CFP) will carry that momentum into a rematch with eighth-ranked Baylor (11-1, 8-1, No. 7 CFP) in the Big 12 championship game.

Oklahoma led the Big 12 in total defense during conference play after finishing last a season ago.

"I think we keep getting a lit-



Sue Ochocka/AP

Linebacker Kenneth Murray leads the Oklahoma defense with 85 tackles this season, including 13 for loss. The Sooners led the Big 12 in total defense during conference play.



RON JENNINS/AP

Linebacker Terrel Bernard leads the Baylor defense with 95 tackles. The Bears led the Big 12 in scoring defense.

tle bit better each week," coach Lincoln Riley said. "It's a constant climb, every year, even if your system's four or five years old, it's always a constant climb, and especially in the first year of a system. Totally new coaches, scheme, everything. It takes time. And if you're coaching it the right way and if your players are responding the right way, then it should get better."

Baylor also has had a turnaround this season under defensive coordinator Phil Snow. The Bears led the Big 12 in scoring defense and ranked third in total defense in league play this season, a year after finishing seventh in total defense and eighth in scoring defense. The success has helped make Snow a finalist for the Broyles Award given to the nation's top assistant coach.

"Obviously, we had to evolve a little bit in terms of what we were doing," Baylor coach Matt Rhule said. "Coach (Snow) had to evolve in terms of getting the best guys on the field. But, it's the same players as last year. That's the cool thing."

Defensive tackle James Lynch leads the Big 12 with 10½ sacks and is third with 15½ tackles for loss. Linebacker Terrel Bernard leads the team with 95 tackles, and linebacker Jordan Williams is second with 68. Cornerback Grayland Arnold leads the squad with six interceptions.

Baylor lost top tackler Clay

By the numbers

336.8

Total yards Oklahoma's defense is giving up per game on average.

352.8

Totals yards Baylor's defense is giving up per game on average.

SOURCE: sports-reference.com

Johnston at midseason to a knee injury, yet the unit continues to thrive. Last week, Baylor held Kansas to 280 total yards and forced six turnovers in a 61-6 win.

Rhule said a key was players' willingness to improve and take direction from Snow.

"You can coach all you want, but if the player doesn't want to get better or doesn't trust you or doesn't have a relationship with you, it doesn't matter," Rhule said.

Oklahoma's defense has Bay-

lor's attention. The Sooners gave up just 204 yards in a 28-24 win over TCU, then held Oklahoma State to 335 yards in a 34-16 victory.

"They've been playing real good defense these last few weeks," Baylor quarterback Charlie Brewer said. "We know that we need to play well in order for us to be on that winning end. We're going to have to score points and establish the line of scrimmage."

Murray leads Oklahoma with 85 tackles, including 13 for loss. Defensive end Ronnie Perkins leads the team with six sacks.

Oklahoma cornerback Parnell Motley ranks fifth with 12 passes defended and first with four fumbles forced. He was the Big 12 Defensive Player of the Week last week after forcing two fumbles, including a recovery, and intercepting a pass in the win over Oklahoma State.

The Sooners created turnovers in the final minutes of wins over Iowa State, Baylor and TCU. Now, the Sooners are looking for consistency.

"We've just got to keep climbing," Murray said. "I think that's really the biggest thing, not getting satisfied, not getting complacent. There's definitely more room for improvement, more out there for us. We've got to keep climbing to go get that."

AP sports writer Stephen Hawkins contributed to this report.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

All-America watch

Championship weekend: Elite meet to compete

Great matchups abound in conference title games

By RALPH D. RUSSO

Associated Press

Only the best of the best get to play this weekend in college football. Championship weekend crowns the winner of 10 Bowl Subdivision conferences and matches up some big-time players. A look at some of the potential All-Americans who will be matching up in major college football's biggest trophy games. The AP All-America team will be announced Dec. 16.

American Athletic Conference

No. 21 Cincinnati at No. 16 Memphis: Ahmad Gardner, CB, Cincinnati vs. Antonio Gibson, WR, Memphis. Gardner is a freshman who has quickly developed into a lock-down corner. He has returned two of his three interceptions for touchdowns. Gibson is a versatile playmaker.

The senior is the Tigers' second-leading receiver, averaging 20.8 yards per catch with seven touchdowns and has also run for 233 yards and three scores on 20 carries.

Atlantic Coast Conference

No. 22 Virginia vs. No. 3 Clemson: Bryce Perkins, QB, Virginia vs. Isaiah Simmons, LB, Clemson

To be realistic, Perkins won't be making many All-America teams with so many terrific quarterbacks around the country. But he is one of the most dynamic players in the country, carrying the Cavaliers' offense (303 yards per game in total offense, tops in the ACC). Simmons is one of the most versatile defenders in the country. He has 14 tackles for loss.

Big 12 Conference

No. 8 Baylor vs. No. 6 Oklahoma: Bravyn Roy, DT, Baylor vs. Creed Humphrey,



BOB ANDRES, ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION/AP

Georgia defensive back Eric Stokes, left, is an All-American candidate. He and his teammates will be tested by LSU's offense. The Tigers have several great receivers, including All-American candidate Ja'Marr Chase, who leads the nation with 17 TD catches.

C, Oklahoma

The 333-pound Roy clogs the middle for the Big 12's top defense (4.77 yards per play) and has 10½ tackles for loss. Humphrey might be the best center in the country, helping pave the way for the Sooners' running game, which is No. 1 in the Big 12 at 260 yards per game.

Big Ten Conference

No. 10 Wisconsin vs. No. 2 Ohio State: Chris Orr, LB, Wisconsin vs. J.K. Dobbins, RB, Ohio State

Orr is an active linebacker with 13.5 tackles for loss and two fumbles forced. The Badgers' stingy defense has allowed just seven rushing touchdowns. Dobbins is on a tear lately, with 368 yards rushing in the last two games against Penn State and Michigan. He also had 163 on 20 carries in the first meeting against Wisconsin.

Conference USA

UAB at Florida Atlantic: Garrett Marino, DL, UAB vs. Harrison Bryant, TE, Florida Atlantic

It's not likely a 290-pound interior defensive lineman and 240-pound pass catching tight end will be bumping into each other much Saturday. But these are the best players on each team. Bryant is a legit All-America candidate with 61 catches for 965 yards and six scores. Marino has 12½ tackles for loss for what has been far and away C-USA's best defense.

Mid-America Conference

Miami (Ohio) vs. Central Michigan: Travion Banks, CB, Miami (Ohio) vs. Ja-Corey Sullivan, WR, Central Michigan

Banks has been one of the best defensive players in the MAC, with four interceptions and five other passes broken up. Sullivan is Central Michigan's big-play receiver, averaging 15.5 yards per catch. Banks could also see a lot of Kalil Pimpleton, who leads the MAC in catches with 73.

Mountain West Conference

Hawaii vs. Boise State: Cedric Byrd II, WR, Hawaii vs. Curtis Weaver, DE, Boise State

Another one where the two won't go head-to-head, but if you're looking for All-America contenders, these are the guys. Byrd is first in the Mountain West in catches with 91 and third in receiving yards with

1,049 and 10 touchdowns. Weaver leads the conference in sacks with 13½ and is a leading contender for Mountain West defensive player of the year.

Pac-12 Conference

No. 14 Oregon vs. No. 5 Utah: Peni Sewell, OT, Oregon vs. Bradley Anae, DE, Utah

Big-time matchup. Sewell is on the short list of best offensive linemen in the country. The sophomore has the size and athleticism of a future top NFL Draft pick. Anae is the best pass rusher (12½ sacks) on the Pac-12's best defense.

Across the line, the matchup of Oregon's offense and Utah's defense should be a nasty fight between a bunch of big, talented players.

Southeastern Conference

No. 4 Georgia vs. No. 1 LSU: Eric Stokes, CB, Georgia vs. Ja'Marr Chase, WR, LSU

The whole Georgia defense vs. LSU offense should be terrific. The Bulldogs are near the top in most defensive categories and the Tigers are lighting up scoreboards with Heisman Trophy front-runner Joe Burrow at quarterback. Stokes is Georgia's top corner. Chase is the nation's leading receiver, averaging 132.5 yards per game and 20.8 per catch, with 17 touchdowns.

Sun Belt Conference

Louisiana at Appalachian State: Kevin Dotson, OG, Louisiana vs. E.J. Scott, NT, Appalachian State

Dotson is a powerful run blocker, leading the way for a run-heavy offense that averages 274.2 yards per game. Other Appalachian State players get more stats, but the 275-pound Scott is an undersized disruptor in the middle who frees up his teammates.



HOLLY HART/AP

Wisconsin's Chris Orr, right, sacks Illinois quarterback Brandon Peters. Orr plays Saturday against Ohio State. The Buckeyes have running back J.K. Dobbins, an All-America candidate who ran for 163 yards earlier this season against the Badgers.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL/OLYMPICS

Howard comes up big for Marquette

Undersized Marquette senior guard finds ways to dominate, leads nation in scoring

By FRED GOODALL
Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Markus Howard continues to find ways to dominate basketball games despite his undersized stature.

The 5-foot-11 Marquette preseason All-American and reigning Big East player of the year leads the nation in scoring at 26 points a game.

"We need Markus to be the player and the star he is. It makes everyone better," said Golden Eagles coach Steve Wojciechowski. "He gives us a swagger. He gives us a confidence when he's doing his thing."

He did his thing at Orlando Invitational.

Howard scored 91 points on the first two days of the tournament, making a dazzling array of step-back three-pointers and seemingly blowing past befuddled defenders at will when he chose to drive to the basket for a closer look.

He led Marquette to the championship game, where Howard and the Golden Eagles were derailed by third-ranked Maryland. But during their run, Howard became the first Big East player to ever have back-to-back 40-point games, including a 51-point outburst against Southern California in the semifinals.

"Just another incredible performance," said Wojciechowski, who watched the senior from Chandler, Ariz. go for 40 the previous night against Davidson.

Howard was the last player to leave the court after his impressive outing, pausing to pose for

By the numbers

91

Total points by Marquette's Markus Howard in his first two games at the Orlando Invitational, joining Pete Maravich and Bob Pettit as the only major conference players to score 40 points on consecutive days.

26.0

Howard's nation-leading scoring average through seven games.

SOURCE: Associated Press

pictures before cheerfully playing through a pack of young Golden Eagles fans chanting his name.

It was the third 50-point game of Howard's career. He also joined Mississippi's Johnny Neumann and LSU's Pete Maravich and Bob Pettit as the only players in a major conference to score at least 40 on consecutive days.

"I don't really pay too much attention to that. Whatever comes is truly a blessing," Howard said



SCOTT AUDETTE/AP

Marquette guard Markus Howard (0) was held to a season-low six points by Maryland but still leads the nation with an average of 26 points a game.

of the milestones. "I'm so thankful to be in the position I am, having teammates and coaches I have who let me have the freedom to be who I am and comfortable with who I am."

A second-team All-American last season when he led Marquette to the NCAA Tournament, Howard leads the nation at 26 points a game. He did not play Wednesday night's home game against Jacksonville because of the team's concussion protocol. He was averaging 29.3 before Maryland overwhelmed the Golden Eagles 84-63 in the Orlando Invitational final, limiting Howard to six points on 1-for-12 shooting.

The Terrapins made a concerted effort to keep the ball out of Howard's hands, a task 6-foot-5 Darryl Morsell took to heart.

And when Maryland's best defender wasn't blanketing the Marquette star, 6-foot-6 Aaron Wiggins made things just as difficult for Howard.

"Our goal was just to make it tough," Morsell said. "Con-

test every shot, just try to get physical."

It wasn't anything out of the ordinary for Howard.

Wojciechowski noted Howard has faced nearly every type of defense imaginable during his career. He's been held to single digits seven times over the past two-plus seasons, but he's always bounced back.

"The fact people defend Markus hard is not new. He's Big East player of the year. He's an All-American last year," the coach said. "Teams have gone out to stop him. We have to learn, relearn with this group, how to figure that out."

Howard has 51 career games of 20-plus points, 20 with 30 or more and six of at least 40. He has no intentions of slowing down as he approaches another milestone he'll share with his brother, Jordan, who played at Central Arkansas from 2015-18 and was Southland Conference player of the year as a senior.

As a duo, the Howards have

scored 4,661 points. The only other combo of brothers that's scored more is Seth and Stephen Curry, who finished their NCAA careers with 4,736.

"My teammates give me supreme confidence. If they tell me to keep going, I'm going to keep going. I'm never going to stop. That's kind of the mentality I've had as a scorer," Howard said. "No matter what's being thrown at me, I'm going to continue to come at you. Just continue to be aggressive and play with a chip on my shoulder."

Turns out, what's good for Howard is also good for the Golden Eagles, who feed off his energy.

"I think if I don't show, that it definitely changes our team a lot," Howard said. "When I play with a certain swagger and confidence, different guys are able to play with that same kind of edge. I think it's good for our whole team because the best comes out of our team when everybody's playing that way."



Jae C. Hong/AP

Athletes dive into the water during a women's triathlon test event at Odaiba Marine Park, a venue for marathon swimming and triathlon at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Some swimmers and an 11,000-member coaching body want an alternative to the venue, because of heat-related concerns.

Hot water: Pressure is on to move Tokyo Olympics open-water venue

By STEPHEN WADE AND ANDREW DAMPF
Associated Press

TOKYO — The IOC moved next year's Tokyo Olympic marathons and race walks out of the Japanese capital to avoid the stifling heat and humidity.

Now some swimmers and an 11,000-member coaching body are asking that something similar should be done with the distance-swimming venue in Tokyo Bay.

Known as the "Odaiba Marine Park," the water temperatures there were near danger levels in test events this summer for open-water swimming and triathlon. E. coli levels also plague the urban venue, and athletes have complained about the odors coming from the small inlet.

"Here's the reality," Catherine Kase, who coaches open water for the United States Olympic team, said in an email. "If a marathoner faints or passes out, they may get a few bumps and bruises. If the same

thing happens to an open-water swimmer, the result could be lethal."

Water temperatures in the venue this summer were very warm, climbing one day to 86.9 Fahrenheit. That's barely under the limit of 87.8F, set by swimming's world governing body FINA. The temperatures were consistently in the 84F-86F range.

FINA rules specify that the race will be shortened or canceled if temperatures go over the limit.

FINA rules read: "All open-water swimming alternative plans should be made in case environmental factors make the swim unsafe forcing it to be canceled or curtailed."

Kase added. "We would like to push for a viable back-up plan. The straightforward answer is that we are not comfortable with the Odaiba venue."

Kase noted that U.S. swimmers are advised against participating if temperatures exceed 85F. She also said U.S. swimmers can still choose to swim "and will likely feel pressure to do so" at big events.

NFL

Rams' McVay explains Gurley's increased load

By GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. — Todd Gurley's light workload was the most baffling aspect of the first half of the Los Angeles Rams' season.

Now that the star running back's activity is picking up while the Rams (7-5) desperately chase a playoff spot, coach Sean McVay has identified the prime factor behind Gurley's rebound.

"Me not being an idiot," McVay said Wednesday.

McVay repeatedly claimed early in the season that his sparing usage of Gurley wasn't due to a lingering knee injury or a desire to prevent his high-priced star from getting worn down early. Instead, McVay constantly said he was using Gurley in a rotation that would give Los Angeles its best chance to win.

His explanation was greeted with raised eyebrows by Rams fans who figured they had the best chance to win with the ball in the hands of Gurley, one of the NFL's top running backs in his first four seasons.

In their first eight games this season, the Rams' franchise running back never touched the ball more than 20 times. Gurley sat out long stretches while sharing snaps with backups Malcolm Brown and rookie Darrell Henderson, and he didn't produce a 100-yard rushing game.

Gurley still hasn't gone for 100 yards this season, but he is taking a bigger role in McVay's game plan. In three of the Rams' last four wins, Gurley touched the ball at least 19 times, including his 95-yard rushing performance in the Rams' 34-7 win at Arizona last weekend.

"You don't want to make the same mistakes that you ended up making earlier on in the season," McVay said. "I think he's done a nice job handling a bigger workload, but then also you do have confidence in those other guys if they need to give him a spell."

McVay on Wednesday again denied he was resting Gurley for later in the season, perhaps believing the defending NFC champions could get back to the playoffs

without a potentially draining workload for his star ball-carrier. Instead, the Rams are in third place in the NFC West behind Seattle and San Francisco, two of the league's top teams.

"You're just kind of working through the best way to utilize all of our players and figuring out what our best identity is," McVay said. "I think we're still working through it, but (load management) didn't have anything to do with that."

Heading into a Sunday night visit from the Seahawks (10-2), Los Angeles is one game behind Minnesota (8-4) for the second NFC wild card spot with four games to play.

The Rams' narrow loss in Seattle earlier this season was the only one of their five defeats in which Gurley made a significant impact. No matter the reason, his relative absence from their losses has baffled many.

"He's being hard on himself," Rams quarterback Jared Goff said when told about McVay's self-blaming for Gurley's inactivity. "I think we all want to get Todd involved as much as possible."

The most frustrating Gurley game this season was Los Angeles' 17-12 defeat in Pittsburgh last month in which Gurley inexplicably didn't touch the ball in the fourth quarter, watching from the sideline while Brown played with the first-team offense.

McVay blamed himself for that bizarre substitution pattern one day after the game, saying he wished he had changed the normal rotation. He didn't explain how any rotation or pattern could have been in place that kept his \$60 million tailback on the sideline for two straight series in the fourth quarter of a one-possession game.

"I think there's some instances where you look at it and it's always hindsight in terms of what you can do," McVay said. "I think the Steelers game stands out in terms of where we were running the football well and didn't really give him a chance to get back going based on how that game played out. So you always try to learn from your previous experiences."



RICK SCUTERI/AP

In three of the Rams' last four wins, running back Todd Gurley, left, touched the ball at least 19 times, including his 95-yard rushing performance in the Rams' 34-7 win over the Cardinals last week.



Point of focus

Patriots must solve second-down struggles to beat Chiefs

By KYLE HIGHTOWER
Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — Patriots coach Bill Belichick had much to lament about his team's loss to the Texans last week. But one thing that stuck out was how his defense struggled to defend the pass on second down.

It will again be a focal point this week as New England (10-2) crafts a game plan it hopes can slow down reigning MVP Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs' multifaceted offense.

The Patriots narrowly held off the Chiefs (8-4) in two meetings last season, earning a 43-40 victory during the regular season and 37-31 overtime win in the AFC championship game.

Kansas City coach Andy Reid said he expects an even tougher matchup this time around opposite a defense that entered the week ranked second in the NFL against the pass, allowing just 163.5 yards per game.

"They've got a pretty good defensive coordinator (Belichick) right now," Reid joked. "You talk about the best in the business. He's done a heck of a job. I'm sure he's enjoying it. You get our age, man, it's one of the fun things you get to do."

That wasn't the case in New England's two losses this season when the Patriots struggled to contain quarterbacks Lamar Jackson and Deshaun Watson on second down.

In their 37-20 loss to the Ravens last month, Jackson threw the ball nine times on second down, completing first-down passes on four of those attempts.

Watson had similar success during Houston's 28-22 win over New England last week, throwing the ball 15 times on second down and converting first downs six times, including a 13-yard touchdown.

"Honestly, it wasn't that great against Kansas City last year either in the playoff game," Belichick said. "So, that's something we have to do a better job of coaching and executing."

That won't be easy against



PHOTOS BY STEVEN SENNE, TOP, AND CHARLIE REIDEL, ABOVE/AP

If Patriots head coach Bill Belichick, top, can't find a way to solve New England's struggles defending the pass on second down, Kansas City quarterback Patrick Mahomes, above, and the high-octane Chiefs offense could have a big game on Sunday.

a Chiefs offense that is tied for ninth in the NFL in averaging 5.9 yards per play on second down. By comparison, Baltimore is fourth in the NFL, averaging 6.5 yards on second down. The Texans are eighth (6.0 yards per play).

Overall, the Chiefs have also converted a first down on 34.2% of their second downs, which ranks 10th in the league. Baltimore currently leads the league with a 44.2% conversion rate. Houston is sixth at 36.1%.

Patriots safety Devin McCourty said one of the reasons the Chiefs are so dangerous is the way they use different formations and movement prior to the snap to disguise where they're going with the ball.

"A lot of the offense is a lot of misdirection and guys going different ways," he said. "I think defensively your eyes are very important. You gotta be looking at what you're supposed to be looking at."

Reid expects this latest version of the Patriots defense to display new wrinkles on every down with Belichick calling the plays.

"You can see them doing some different things. Putting in things that he likes," Reid said. "It's the same with every play caller. You

see certain things that they favor over maybe a different guy."

Whatever Belichick puts in, he'll be doing it using personnel that Reid is familiar with.

One of those players is cornerback Stephon Gilmore, who Reid has faced multiple times going back to the five years Gilmore spent in Buffalo.

"I've watched him mature over the years," Reid said.

What he's witnessed is Gilmore develop into one of the league's best cornerbacks. He is typically used by the Patriots to cover opponents' top receiving threats.

This week that will almost certainly include him matching up against Kansas City tight end Travis Kelce, who leads the Chiefs with 68 catches for 923 yards and four touchdowns.

Gilmore had success covering Kelce in the Patriots' two meetings with Kansas City last season and this season when he was opposite another quality tight end in Philadelphia's Zach Ertz.

Reid believes it could be an important matchup again on Sunday.

"With any man situation, it's man to man. So you've got to win, right?" Reid said. "However you do that, that's the objective."

NFL

Tannehill making most of second chance

By TERESA M. WALKER
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Ryan Tannehill is making the most of his second time around as a starter in the NFL.

And the Tennessee Titans are enjoying the ride.

Since Tennessee made him the starter in mid-October, Tannehill is 5-1 and has helped the Titans (7-5) climb a game back of division leader Houston in the AFC South. He leads the NFL with his 113.9 passer rating and average of 9.10 yards per pass. Tannehill is second in completion percentage while connecting on 72.7% of his passes.

He's been even better in the fourth quarter, helping the Titans win four times after being tied or trailing going into the final 15 minutes of games. Tennessee also is averaging 29.7 points per game with Tannehill as the QB, which is second in the NFL in that span behind only Baltimore (37).

The quarterback Miami traded away in March is playing some of the best football of his NFL career. He is playing so well, some might say he is in a zone.

"Yeah..." Tannehill said Wednesday. "We're doing some good things, have a lot to improve on. Still a lot of things we have to clean up from last week's game."

On Sunday, if Tannehill completes more than 75% of his passes and has a passer rating of 130 or better in Oakland against the Raiders (6-6), he'll join Aaron Rodgers (2011) as the only NFL



AJ MASTAP

Tennessee Titans quarterback Ryan Tannehill, left, leads the league with a 113.9 passer rating.

players ever to manage that in three straight games in a single season.

Oakland coach Jon Gruden said people might not remember Tannehill didn't open the season as the starting quarterback or get the starter's reps. Gruden also pointed out that coming off the

bench is a hard thing to do.

"He's been money at crunch time," Gruden said. "You saw the Chiefs game. He's played very good football when all the chips are on the table. That's No. 1. And he's showcasing his dual-threat ability. He can throw it, he can run it, and they run a lot of

creative plays with him because of his athleticism. His experience and his game is going really good right now. It's a credit to him."

It's an impressive turnaround for a quarterback dumped by the team that drafted him eighth overall in 2012 out of Texas A&M. Miami wanted Tannehill gone

badly enough that the Dolphins agreed to pay \$5 million of his salary in trading him to Tennessee. Tannehill, who had been due \$18.7 million in base salary, still counts \$18.4 million against Miami's cap this season.

The way Tannehill is playing, he could wind up earning more in incentives from the Titans than the \$2 million base salary they're paying him.

Tannehill, who turns 32 in July, insists he isn't thinking of what the future might bring as a potential free agent.

"For me, it's a head-down process of take advantage of the week," Tannehill said. "I've seen how this thing goes. The waves and the ins and outs of the season, so if you start taking a step back at this point, then you're doing a disservice to your teammates and to yourself."

Tannehill has impressed his teammates with his poise and confidence. Wide receiver Tajae Sharpe said it can be hard in the NFL to stay ready not knowing when that next chance will come.

"A lot of guys would've not been prepared for that, opportunity, but he was absolutely ready for it. He came in, and he's been doing a great job."

Jacksonville coach Doug Marrone watched Tannehill in Miami when the coach was in Buffalo.

"Watching him now, I really think he's playing the best I've seen him play," Marrone said. "He's playing with a lot of confidence. He's putting the ball into tight windows, he's able to run."

Ravens rely heavily on tight end 'three-headed monster'

By TODD KARPOVICH
Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — Mark Andrews is part of a group of Baltimore Ravens tight ends he likes to call a "three-headed monster."

Andrews, Hayden Hurst and Nick Boyle have each played a huge role in the offense and have become a favorite target for quarterback Lamar Jackson.

The three tight ends could be the difference again this week in Buffalo, where Baltimore can clinch a playoff berth with a victory against the Bills.

"The three tight ends, the three-headed monster," Andrews said. "All these guys, Hayden, Nick, these guys are flat-out ball players. It's cool to see."

The tight ends are not necessarily the primary read for Jackson. However, if his receivers fail to get open, Jackson knows he has three sure-handed targets capable of extending a drive.

"I'm just going through my progressions," Jackson said. "Sometimes, you just have to take what the defense gives you. Sometimes, they do a great job covering everyone downfield, so you just have to checkdown and hit a tight end to convert. That's

By the numbers

44.5%

Percentage of completed passes that have gone to one of Baltimore's three key tight ends this season.

SOURCE: NFL.com

just how we play ball."

Andrews is the most prolific of the three and leads the team in receptions (53), receiving yards (693) and touchdown receptions (seven).

Andrews and his fellow tight ends also embrace their role as blockers, which has helped the Ravens establish the NFL's most prolific running game, averaging 207.8 yards per game.

"We're all so versatile, and we're able to do so much," Andrews said.

Boyle is ranked third behind rookie receiver Marquise Brown with 25 receptions for 281 yards.

Boyle, a five-year veteran, caught his first career touchdown pass Nov. 3 against the New England Patriots. In March, he signed a three-year, \$18 million contract extension through 2021.

Hurst was the Ravens' first-round pick (25th overall) in the 2018 NFL Draft. He battled some injuries in his rookie year but has been a critical playmaker this season. Hurst is ranked fifth on the team with 23 receptions for 213 yards and a touchdown.

Hurst made a pivotal play in the Ravens' 20-17 victory over the San Francisco 49ers in Week 13. He kept the final drive alive by catching a pass in traffic on a fourth-and-2 and then had to grind his way to the first-down marker. That play helped set up Justin Tucker's game-winning, 49-yard field goal. Hurst received his first game ball for his performance.

He said the relationship among the tight ends extends well beyond the playing field.

"Those two guys (Andrews and Boyle) are like my brothers," Hurst said. "We are constantly hanging out off the field. We're together all the time... We complement each other really well when we're on the field. It's just fun to play with those guys."



NICK WASS/AP

Baltimore quarterback Lamar Jackson, right, celebrates a touchdown with tight end Mark Andrews, who leads the team in receptions and is one of three tight ends who have been stellar for the Ravens.

NFL

WEEK 14 TELEVIEWED GAMES

MARQUEE MATCHUP

San Francisco 49ers (10-2)
at New Orleans Saints (10-2)

AFN-Atlantic, 7 p.m. Sunday CET; 3 a.m. Monday JKT

Baltimore Ravens (10-2)
at Buffalo Bills (9-3)AFN-Sports
7 p.m. Sunday CET
3 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Ravens lead 5-3.

Last meeting: Ravens beat Bills 47-3, Sept. 9, 2018.

Notes: Ravens have won past two meetings ... Ravens coach John Harbaugh is 3-1 against Bills. ... Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson passed for 105 yards and a TD and rushed for 101 yards and a TD last week in 20-17 victory over 49ers. He needs 63 rushing yards to surpass Michael Vick (1,039 in 2006) for the most rushing yards by a QB in a single season in league history. ... Tight end Mark Andrews had three catches for 50 yards and a TD last week. ... Bills quarterback Josh Allen completed 19 of 24 passes for 231 yards and a TD last week in 26-15 victory over Cowboys. ... Running back Frank Gore ranks third all-time with 15,300 career rushing yards and fourth with 19,180 scrimmage yards. ... Wide receiver Cole Beasley had six catches for 110 yards and a TD last week against his former team.

Tennessee Titans (7-5)
at Oakland Raiders (6-6)AFN-Sports2
10 p.m. Sunday CET
6 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Raiders lead 26-20.

Last meeting: Raiders beat Titans 26-16, Sept. 10, 2017.

Notes: Raiders have won past three meetings. ... Raiders coach Jon Gruden is 1-3 against Titans. ... Titans quarterback Ryan Tannehill completed 17 of 22 passes for 182 yards and two TDs last week in 31-17 victory over Colts. ... Running back Derrick Henry had 166 scrimmage yards (149 rushing, 17 receiving) and a rushing TD last week. ... Rookie wide receiver A.J. Brown had three catches for 45 yards last week in 40-9 loss to Chiefs. He leads all AFC rookies with 626 receiving yards. ... Raiders quarterback Derek Carr passed for 222 yards and a TD last week. ... Rookie running back Josh Jacobs rushed for 104 yards last week, his fifth game with 100 or more rushing yards. ... Tight end Darnell Waller had seven catches for 100 yards last week.

SERIES RECORD: 49ers lead 47-26-2.

LAST MEETING: Saints beat 49ers 41-23, Nov. 6, 2016.

49ers OFFENSE: OVERALL (6), RUSH (2), PASS (16).

49ers DEFENSE: OVERALL (1), RUSH (22), PASS (1)

SAINTS OFFENSE: OVERALL (13), RUSH (17), PASS (9).

SAINTS DEFENSE: OVERALL (10), RUSH (3), PASS (17).

STREAKS, STATS AND NOTES: Saints have won

two of past three meetings. ... 49ers are plus-6 in takeaways/giveaways category, Saints are plus-11. ... Saints coach Sean Payton is 6-1 against 49ers. ... 49ers running back Raheem Mostert had career-high 154 scrimmage yards (146 rushing, 8 receiving) and fourth career rushing TD in Week 13 loss to Ravens. ... Tight end George Kittle has a receiving TD in two of his past three games. Since entering the NFL in 2017, he ranks third among tight ends in receptions (185) and receiving yards (2,579). ... Rookie defensive lineman Nick Bosa ranks second in the NFL with 14 tackles for loss. ... Linebacker Fred Warner led team with 11 tackles and had two pass deflections in Week 13. ... Saints backup quarterback/utility player Taysom Hill had a rushing TD and a receiving TD in Week 13 victory over Falcons. ... Wide receiver Michael Thomas leads NFL with 110 receptions and 1,290 receiving yards. ... Defensive end Cameron Jordan had a career-high four sacks last week. ... Safety Marcus Williams has 12 pass deflections, the most among safeties. ... Defensive end Marcus Davenport had two sacks against Falcons.

Saints running back
Alvin Kamara
Burt Dill/APGame capsules compiled
from NFLcommunications.comKansas City Chiefs (8-4)
at New England Patriots (10-2)

AFN-Sports

10:25 p.m. Sunday CET
6:25 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Chiefs lead 18-14-3.

Last meeting: Patriots beat Chiefs 43-40, Oct. 14, 2018.

Notes: Chiefs have won two of past three. ... Chiefs coach Andy Reid is 3-4 against Patriots. ... Patriots coach Bill Belichick is 8-4 against Chiefs. ... Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes passed for 175 yards and a TD and rushed for a TD last week in 40-9 rout of Raiders. ... Running back Damien Williams has 100 or more rushing yards in two of his past three games. ... Wide receiver Tyreek Hill had five catches for 55 yards last week. ... Tight end Travis Kelce had five catches for a team-high 90 yards in Week 13. ... Patriots have at least 10 wins in 17 consecutive seasons, the most all-time. ... Patriots quarterback Tom Brady passed for 326 yards and three TDs last week in 29-22 loss to Texans. ... Running back James White had a career-high 177 scrimmage yards (98 rushing, 79 rushing) and two TD catches last week.

Seattle Seahawks (10-2)
at Los Angeles Rams (7-5)

AFN-Sports

2:20 a.m. Monday CET
10:20 a.m. Monday JKT

Series: Seahawks lead 24-18.

Last meeting: Seahawks beat Rams 30-29, Oct. 3, 2019.

Notes: Rams have won three of past four meetings. ... Seahawks coach Pete Carroll is 10-10 against Rams. ... Seahawks running back Chris Carson rushed for 102 yards and a TD in 37-30 victory over Vikings in Week 13. ... Running back Rashad Penny had 107 scrimmage yards (74 rushing, 33 receiving) and two TDs (one rushing, one receiving) last week. ... Wide receiver D.K. Metcalf had six catches for a team-high 75 yards last week. ... Linebacker Bobby Wagner led team with 10 tackles in Week 13. ... Rams quarterback Jared Goff passed for 424 yards and two TDs in 34-7 Week 13 victory over Cardinals. ... Running back Todd Gurley had 115 scrimmage yards (95 rushing, 20 receiving) and a TD against Cardinals. ... Wide receiver Robert Woods had 13 catches for 172 yards last week.

EXPANDED STANDINGS

American Conference

	W	L	T	Pct	East				Home	Away	AFC	NFC	Div
					PF	PA							
New England	10	2	0	.833	322	145	5-0-0	5-2-0			6-2-0	4-0-0	4-0-0
Buffalo	9	3	0	.750	257	188	4-2-0	5-1-0			6-2-0	3-1-0	3-1-0
N.Y. Jets	4	8	0	.333	204	280	3-3-0	1-5-0			1-7-0	3-1-0	0-4-0
Miami	3	9	0	.250	200	377	2-5-0	1-4-0			2-7-0	1-2-0	1-3-0
South													
Houston	8	4	0	.667	293	271	5-1-0	3-3-0			7-2-0	1-2-0	3-1-0
Tennessee	7	5	0	.583	276	234	4-2-0	3-3-0			5-4-0	2-1-0	2-2-0
Indianapolis	6	6	0	.500	261	257	4-3-0	2-3-0			5-6-0	1-0-0	3-2-0
Jacksonville	4	8	0	.333	220	292	2-4-0	2-4-0			4-5-0	0-3-0	1-4-0
North													
Baltimore	10	2	0	.833	406	219	5-1-0	5-1-0			6-2-0	4-0-0	3-1-0
Pittsburgh	7	5	0	.583	326	225	5-2-0	2-3-0			6-3-0	1-2-0	3-2-0
Cleveland	5	7	0	.417	246	372	3-3-0	2-4-0			5-4-0	0-3-0	2-1-0
Cincinnati	1	11	0	.083	179	298	1-5-0	0-6-0			1-7-0	0-4-0	0-4-0
West													
Kansas City	8	4	0	.667	348	365	3-3-0	5-1-0			6-3-0	2-1-0	4-0-0
Oakland	6	6	0	.500	237	324	5-1-0	1-5-0			4-4-0	2-2-0	2-2-0
Denver	4	8	0	.333	198	237	3-3-0	1-5-0			4-5-0	0-3-0	2-2-0
L.A. Chargers	4	8	0	.333	244	241	2-4-0	2-4-0			2-7-0	2-1-0	0-4-0

y-clinched division

National Conference

	W	L	T	Pct	East				Home	Away	NFC	AFC	Div
					PF	PA							
Dallas	6	6	0	.500	310	326	3-3-0	3-3-0			5-3-0	1-3-0	4-0-0
Philadelphia	5	7	0	.417	274	284	3-3-0	2-4-0			3-5-0	2-2-0	1-1-0
Washington	3	9	0	.250	173	290	1-5-0	2-4-0			2-6-0	1-3-0	0-3-0
N.Y. Giants	2	10	0	.167	230	393	1-5-0	1-5-0			2-7-0	0-3-0	1-2-0
South													
y-New Orleans	10	2	0	.833	298	248	5-1-0	5-1-0			8-2-0	2-0-0	4-1-0
Tampa Bay	5	7	0	.417	340	346	1-4-0	4-3-0			4-6-0	1-1-0	2-3-0
Carolina	5	7	0	.417	280	320	2-4-0	3-3-0			2-7-0	3-0-0	1-3-0
Atlanta	3	9	0	.250	260	323	1-5-0	2-4-0			3-6-0	0-3-0	2-2-0
North													
Green Bay	9	3	0	.750	289	255	5-1-0	4-2-0			6-2-0	3-1-0	3-0-0
Minnesota	8	4	0	.667	319	242	5-0-0	3-4-0			6-3-0	2-1-0	1-2-0
Chicago	6	6	0	.500	212	208	3-3-0	3-3-0			5-4-0	1-2-0	3-1-0
Detroit	3	8	1	.292	280	315	2-4-0	1-4-1			2-6-1	1-2-0	0-4-0
West													
Seattle	10	2	0	.833	329	293	4-2-0	6-0-0			7-1-0	3-1-0	3-0-0
San Francisco	10	2	0	.833	349	183	5-1-0	5-1-0			7-1-0	3-1-0	3-1-0
L.A. Rams	7	5	0	.583	283	250	3-3-0	4-2-0			5-3-0	2-2-0	1-2-0
Arizona	3	8	1	.292	255	351	1-4-1	2-4-0			2-7-1	1-1-0	0-4-0

ALSO ON AFN

New York Giants (2-10) at Philadelphia Eagles (5-7), AFN-Sports, 2:15 a.m. Tuesday CET; 10:15 a.m. Tuesday JKT
 Pittsburgh Steelers (7-5) at Arizona Cardinals (3-8-1), AFN-Atlantic, 10 p.m. Sunday CET; 6 a.m. Monday JKT

■ Check myafn.net for the most up-to-date TV listings.

REST OF THE SCHEDULE

Washington (3-9) at Green Bay (9-3)
 Indianapolis (6-6) at Tampa Bay (5-7)
 Cleveland (9-3) at Minnesota (4-8)
 Denver (4-8) at Houston (8-4)
 Miami (3-9) at N.Y. (4-8)
 Cincinnati (1-11) at Cleveland (5-7)
 L.A. Chargers (4-8) at Jacksonville (4-8)

SPORTS



Outsized production

Marquette guard Howard leads nation in scoring » College basketball, Page 60

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Quite the contrast

SEC championship features QBs with differing strengths

By CHARLES ODUM
Associated Press

ATHENS, Ga.

Joe Burrow and Jake Fromm bring contrasting strengths to Saturday's Southeastern Conference championship game.

Burrow has been a nightmare matchup for defenses with the ball in his hands for No. 1 LSU.

Fromm, often described as a game manager, wins by making the best decisions to put the ball in other players' hands for No. 4 Georgia.

Burrow bolstered his status as a Heisman Trophy favorite by passing for 352 yards and three touchdowns as LSU (12-0, No. 2 College Football Playoff) capped its perfect regular season with last week's 50-7 win over Texas A&M.

Burrow, the SEC's leader in passing yards and total offense, is dangerous as a runner and passer. He's also important as a leader.

"Joe has the 'it' factor," LSU coach Ed Orgeron said Monday. "He has it. He walks on the field, he has it. He

SEE CONTRAST ON PAGE 57

Inside:

■ Elite matchups in spotlight for conference championship games, Page 59

For all the differences between LSU quarterback Joe Burrow, top, and Georgia's Jake Fromm, bottom, they have one very important thing in common — they'll both be playing in Saturday's SEC title game between the top-ranked Tigers and No. 4 Bulldogs.

AP photos



Tannehill making most of time with Titans » NFL, Page 62

